THE BAPTIZED CHILD

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The baptized child

THE BAPTIZED CHILD.

THE

BAPTIZED CHILD.

BY NEHEMIAH ADAMS,

Pastor of Essex Street Church, Boston.

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AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

TO THE

Maternal Association

OF

ESSEX STREET CHURCH,

BOSTON,

BY THEIR

PASTOR.

PREFACE.

It is not the object of this book to exalt a rite above its proper place as a means of religious benefit, into a test of Christian character, or a reason for schism. Its object is to shew that the practice of Infant Baptism is fitted to promote parental faithfulness and the early sanctification of children. The motive in preparing it, is, to assist those who practise the rite to do it with a full sense of its meaning and importance, and to see the beauty and use of the ordinance. The title of the book might be, in part, THE INTERNAL EVIDENCES OF INFANT BAPTISM as a reasonable and scriptural practice. The mode of Baptism is fully considered, for the purpose of showing the validity of sprinkling in Baptism.

It is not the object of this book to promote a sectarian observance of rites and forms. The wall of separation already made by them, between different denominations of Christians, is, in one sense, 'so high that it is dreadful.' The forms that characterize the various sects of true Christians, and even the differences in their doctrinal belief, may remain to the end of time; but when the full power of Christianity is known, the manifestation of it will appear in the triumph of Christian love amongst the followers of Christ: and

Sprinkling, and Immersion, and Infant Baptism, the Right of Ordination, and the Liturgy, or Election and Perseverance, will be no greater hindrance to Christians, in their affection for each other and in their union to convert the world, than the different costumes adopted and worn by the different companies in a Fire Department should prevent their co-operation to put out a fire. All these things will be subordinated to the love of Christ, and of one another, because Christians will have learnt the spiritual nature of Christianity; and looking upon their own denomination and upon others, the words of Christ will be felt in their sublime and beautiful truth: "*Woman! believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.* But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him."

Then the world will feel that greatest proof of the divine origin of Christianity, The union of Christians in spite of the diversity in their forms and creeds. In view of past alienation and strife, that union will appear the greatest instance of the presence and power of God on earth since the days of miracles; and therefore, Christ, in prophetic prayer, looked to this consummation as the triumph of his cause: — "*That they all may be one; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.*"

But the surrender of rites, forms, and peculiarities of religious belief, and the composition of one Church out of the various denominations, would not be so great an illustration of the power of Christianity, as that the various denominations now existing should remain, but make their peculiarities secondary to Chirstian union and effort. The former might be effected by human policy, ambition, or the influence of some powerful but sinful motive stronger than the love of sect. The latter can be done only by the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven.

The preference of different orders and forms of worship grow out of a diversity in the human mind ; and though the enlightening influence of Christianity will prevent schism and separation hereafter, it is to be expected that different minds will continue to prefer different modes and customs in religion. But these things will be sunk into mere matters of taste and form, and all that hold the essential doctrines of the Gospel, will show the earnest of Heaven in their feelings and conduct towards one another. The true church will then appear to consist of such as the Father seeks to worship Him, confined to no one Christian sect, but representing, by its diffusion amongst many, and at the same time its spiritual union, the society of Heaven made up from every kindred and tongue and people.

Who does not believe that such a day will come ? What Christian heart does not leap at the sound of its coming ? As the heart panteth for the water brooks, what follower of Christ, in this world of alienation and strife, does not pant for such a day ? Is it probable that God will suffer the dissensions of Christendom to be transferred into the rising communities of Christians in heathen lands, and our disputes and the scenes of our disagreement to be acted over again ? Forbid it, Spirit of all Grace ! Let centuries of time and generations of men no more be lost, because the Christian church cannot agree that immersion is or is not the only scriptural mode of Baptism, or whether the right of ordination has descended in one line only from Christ, or whether saints are elected, and will persevere ! Sad profanation of the Christian name and spirit ! To Christ and angels we know not which is the more revolting sight, the rites and practices of heathenism, or the practices of a divided, wrangling Christendom.

We must agree to differ. It is impossible for any sect, by direct effort, to bring others into conformity with it. The greater the effort, the greater will be the repulsion. But if all denominations

should make it appear that they regard their peculiarities of forms and order as mere accidents and not essentials, and forbear to urge them to the prevention of union with true Christians of every name, and show the spirit of Christian love and fellowship rising superiour to what is not of vital consequence in religion, it is not impossible that a strong tendency towards union of spirit which would then begin to prevail, would seek for union in outward form, and several of the great sects in Christendom might unite in one church. If it be asked, Which of the present denominations would be most likely to receive and include the others ? the answer might be, That which should be the first to manifest the spirit which has now been described.

It does not seem *probable* that such a union of sects will ever take place ; but if it does, no arguing about rites and forms, no legislation, in short, no direct attempts to produce conformity will effect it. This experiment has failed. The result will be accomplished, we believe, by each sect throwing down its wall, — not to enlarge its borders, but — because it cannot longer bear to be separate from the children of God. The union in feeling and spirit that would lead to this, would regard all differences in forms as unessential, and either permit them to remain, as we believe they would, or, by a stronger attraction in one denomination than in the others, unite all under one name.

It is by no means certain, that we do not need peculiarities, of form, or service, or denomination, to make us labour with more interest within a certain sphere, and to prevent that loss of strength which a diffusion of interest and labour, however pleasant in itself it might be, would occasion. We know that such restricted interest and zeal is essential to success in secular arts and labours. And moreover, it does appear that some men are, by nature, *Dissenters* from all religious forms but those that are perfectly plain ; and some

are born Episcopalians, and some will be Baptists, and others Methodists ; and either of these, out of their own forms and practices, can no more be free and happy, than birds of different instincts can be so when those instincts are not gratified. Some think that the dislike which a Congregationalist may have to Episcopacy, is sectarianism, in a bad sense of that word. Wrong feelings may indeed attend such dislike ; but we believe that the first cause of it is, in general, a natural, innocent diversity of taste. We have no doubt that some are better Christians for being Methodists, and some for being Congregationalists, and others as Episcopalians, others as Baptists.

Now, why may we not all be willing that others should enjoy their own religious attachments, and we esteem and love them in proportion as we see in them the spirit of Christ?

Have we not tried the experiment long enough of seeking to bring others into conformity with ourselves? What wars and fightings have been the consequence ! When we look at the theological department of a large library, and see what volumes of controversy have been written by each denomination against others, and in self-defence, we are reminded of a hall in a baronial castle, where spears, habergeons, helmets, lances, and the battle-axe frown along the walls. Their banner is feudal, and so are many of their sacred songs, and the warlike motto of the Pilgrim Commonwealth, *Ense* petit placidam, sub libertate, quietem, seems to be held out, sword in hand, towards other denominations.

Shall the morning of the Millenium break upon the church and find the different divisions of her hosts embattled against each other? We cannot hesitate for an answer. The time *will* come, when each denomination of Christians will freely commune with and love all others, without requiring conformity to their own modes and practices, so long as they see in the life and conduct the spirit of true religion.

We are persuaded of the coming of this day. But any association or combination to promote this union, would only create another sect, and prolong the war by making men fight for peace. That feverish restlessness for a visible union of Christian sects, which some now manifest, is, we fear, only a new form of fanaticism. This union must begin in the soul of every follower of Christ, in the private cultivation of the Christian spirit, and in a growing knowledge of Christ's religion. It cometh not with observation. The work of preparation for it must be done in secret, when suddenly a glorious temple will arise, and God will enter it, with the ark of his strength.

Will it assist this consummation, the reader says, to publish a book on Infant Baptism? Ought you not to sacrifice your attachment to this ordinance, to the cause of Christian union? — The answer is, It would be bigotry in us to say to Baptists, or Episcopalians, or Methodists, we will love you and join in your plans if you will accord with us in rites and forms. No. We expect to love and honour them while they retain every peculiarity which is no bar to Christian communion. Let them make no sacrifice of attachment to forms or tenets, but, even with a Christian spirit, try to convince others of their scriptural origin and superiour practical influence ; at the same time holding this doctrine in common with us, That he who has the spirit of Christ, let his costume be what it may, is a friend and brother. Then, if their peculiar modes and forms assist their piety and devotion, it will be little else than barbarism in us to mock at them or seek to draw them away from their attachments.

It is dishonorable to the religion of Christ to suppose that there can be no union amongst Christians but by truces, and compromises, and the diplomatic arrangements of quarrelling nations or men. It is inconsistent with Christian liberty to *demand* numerical unity in

Christian sects ; and we probably mistake the nature of man, if we think that one order or form of worship can suit all men. We rejoice in this diversity in unessential things, so far as it meets the various dispositions and tastes of the human mind ; it is only in spirit that we should be anxious for others to be one with us. An attempt at any other union would be unnatural and forced.

In the exercise of the same spirit which we would desire that others should exercise towards us, I have written this book concerning a practice which is most precious to thousands of the followers of Christ, for its influence on them and their children. But as this practice and the mode of Baptism have made great dissension and strife among Christians, it seemed proper to speak of the nature and duty of Christian union in connection with a new publication on this subject ; so that all might understand two things :

1. That we do not intend to abandon Infant Baptism in order to a union of Christian sects.

2. That, at the same time, we regard this practice as no bar to fellowship with those who reject it, and consider it only as a means of spiritual good and not a condition of salvation, nor a test of Christian character.

If all denominations of true Christians will say these two things of each of their rites and forms, give and receive full liberty of conscience in interpreting the Bible, make nothing essential to Christian communion on earth which will not be recognized in Heaven, and triumph over names, and ceremonies, and the letter of the word, in their zeal to maintain and spread abroad the essential truth, then we shall ALL BE ONE — AS THOU, FATHER, ART IN CHRIST, AND CHRIST IN THEE !

But the spirit of Christianity is yet like a beautiful captive in bonds. Many sects in Christendom have laid their chain upon her. But her day of liberty is near. Rising in the view of men, and

holding forth her fallen chains, she will appear invested with spiritual and celestial beauty, and as each invokes and claims her as his own, she will spread herself abroad in heavenly light, and surveying the people of the Lord under their various names and forms, will bless them and cry, *Above all, and through all, and in you all.* The Lord hasten this in His time. Spirit of Christ! escape from our chains. We hereby take from off thy heavenly nature the bond of a sectarian Baptism, and bid Thee hold communion with all of every name who differ in rites and forms from us, but with us hold the essential grounds of a sinner's Hope!

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CHAPTER I.

Birth of a child. Greatness of the event. Feelings and conduct of a pious parent. The parents and child in eternity. Honour of being a parent. Future joy of a pious mother.

The birth of a child is an event of great importance, as well as an occasion of gratitude and joy. Life, from the infinite Source of Being, is begun in a spirit which is to outlive the sun and stars. Could it speak, it might say with its Maker, from the first moment of its existence, Of my years there is no end! Follow it into eternity, think of its possible experience at the end of millions of years, see it then looking forward with great susceptibilities and powers; — and how interesting the moment when you, its father, first hang over it, with mingled smiles and tears! nay, how *solemn* is that hour, for then it becomes immortal! Overwhelmed with the thought that an undying spirit is born, and committed to your care, you cast yourself with it at the feet of your Maker, beseeching Him to take it into his protection.

Amidst the general joy that fills a household at

the birth of a child, a parent who thinks at all of the future, cannot but be thoughtful and solemn. He stands before the universe, responsible as the parent of an immortal creature. To him, in the ages of eternity, a glorious inhabitant of Heaven will turn and say, My father! and he, as he sees it rising in happiness and honour, will say, My child! Or else, the child in its eternal separation from God, will think of its parents with feelings growing more dreadful with its increasing guilt and pain. Your child will hereafter awaken joy and praise in your heart for its birth, or, if you spend eternity without it in Heaven, or with it in hell, you will say, Good were it for you and for me if you had never been born!

It is the great glory of God, as Creator, that He is Father of Spirits. Angels and other spirits are the joy and crown of his works. It is an honour, then, in itself considered, to sustain the relation of parent to an immortal creature; and they who in Heaven behold their offspring amongst the spirits of the just, will feel that, in their relation as parents, they have a likeness to God in that which to Him is a source of infinite joy. The parental relation, indeed, begins with a part of the race in sorrow. But not as the offence will be the free gift: for she that was first in the transgression will have susceptibilities to happiness, from natural feelings towards offspring, which may make her first in the bliss of Heaven.

Can the reader think of a more perfect image of bliss than the mother of a glorified spirit? a spirit, that shall have turned many to righteousness, and will forever be loved and honoured by Christ and the redeemed, for the part which he bore on earth, in the cause of human salvation. If it is seen that the mother gave such direction to the opening mind of her son as that his subsequent usefulness can be traced back to her influence, surely there will be no crown in Heaven for which that mother would exchange her joy.

CHAPTER II.

Proportion of deaths in infancy. Salvation of infants. Multitudes in Heaven who died in infancy. Human infancy interesting to superior beings. 'Of such is the kingdom of God.' Destruction of heathen Infants, an illustration of good brought out of evil. Destruction of infants with wicked parents not inconsistent with divine goodness. Infants slain by Herod. Their honour and happiness in being identified with the Saviour's incarnation. Future joy of pious parents who lost a young child. Meeting in Heaven. Appeal to those not pious, who have lost children. Present feelings of the departed children towards surviving parents. Future meeting or separation.

The proportion of deaths in infancy is estimated by different writers, at from one-fifth to two-thirds of the whole number of deaths in a given number of years. We know that a large proportion of the race die in infancy and childhood; but the exact relative number it is difficult to determine. It has been stated, that one half of all that are born, die within three years. This being the case under the common operation of the laws of mortality, if we add the destruction of infants in heathen countries, the proportion of the race that die in infancy and childhood is exceedingly great.

I need not argue the point that those who die in infancy are saved. It is a point upon which it becomes us to speak with the recollection that the Bible makes no disclosures respecting it. Yet this may be, because the salvation of infants is a matter of obvious reason; in which case, as in some others, the Bible seems to pay regard to our common sense, by leaving things which may properly be inferred, to be deduced from the general principles of revelation. We shall have occasion to apply this remark in the course of this book.

We have all been interested and affected by the fact that so many children who die, present such striking forwardness of religious views and feelings. I know that the whole matter of mental precociousness is attributable to disease of the brain; and that thoughts and feelings upon religious subjects far beyond the age of the child, are ascribed to the same proximate cause. Yet, who can say that the soul did not first affect the brain, and that the forward action of the soul is not owing to some uncommon spiritual action upon it, as the petals of one flower amongst many are stimulated excessively by the light which, by seeming accident, plays in too profusely upon it, and its premature bloom brings on its premature fall? A child is a great mystery! We dwell upon its depravity, and alas! how early the blight of sin is found amongst the affecting beauty of the opening mind! Yet we

believe that the early sanctification of many children, who, as we have suggested, are spiritualized too highly for their physical natures, may be owing to the love which Heaven bears them, and that their death is only the necessary effect of the rapid advancement of the soul, and analogous to the change of the chrysalis into a higher form of life. While we observe the love of God to these children, who are evidently hastened from the winds and storms of this world to Heaven, it indicates to us a common and secret favour borne to all the infant race, which secures eternal life to them if they die.

Assuming the fact of the salvation of infants, it will follow, that, of the multitude which no man can number of human spirits in Heaven, a large proportion went there in infancy or early childhood.

How interesting, then, to God and angels, is human infancy and childhood! since from those in this condition of life, the company before the throne is in so great a proportion multiplied.

May not Christ have had in mind the relation which infants thus bear to the society of Heaven, when He gave as a reason why they should be brought to Him, *Of such is the kingdom of God?*

Having been familiar with the fact of the increase of that society to so great an extent, by accessions of infant souls, is it strange that, when He came on earth, He took such notice of infants and young children?

Many interesting reflections arise in the mind, in connection with this subject. What consolation does it afford in thinking of the horrid sacrifices of infants in heathen countries, where hundreds of thousands perish every year! The practice of infant sacrifice has probably been the means of saving multitudes, who, had they lived longer on earth might have perished forever. What an illustration of the truth, that God will bring good out of evil!

Does any one question the justice or goodness of God in destroying the infants of the old world with their parents, or the infants of the cities of the plain, or those who in all ages have been partakers of the curse of war, pestilence and famine? It is goodness and mercy that took them from the world; — mercy to them, though a judgment to others, and in its outward appearance a terrible expression of God's hatred of sin, and of its effects, which involve the innocent with the guilty. But the temporary sufferings of the infants were not worthy to be compared with the glory which was, and is now, revealed in them in Heaven.

One of the most painful and mysterious dispensations of God, as it has appeared to many, is the destruction of the infants by Herod, who sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, hoping to cut off the infant Jesus. This must have been a terrific and distressing slaughter;

though, judging from the probable population of those places, the number of infants was not so great as many suppose. But still, what is there to alleviate the feeling of horrour that rises in the mind at the seeming incongruity of the slaughter of helpless children with the nativity of the Saviour of the world?

This view of the subject may afford relief. Here were a company of infant souls that went to Heaven together, as the first fruits of the Saviour's incarnation. They were unconscious martyrs in the cause of Him who died for them. Perhaps they compose a band of glorified spirits, and are associated in the minds of angels and of the redeemed with that most interesting event, the incarnation and the infancy of the Lord from Heaven! Their sufferings were brief; their salvation was made certain; and in view of their intimate connection with the entrance of the Saviour upon his work of redemption, their sufferings and early death were an honour and privilege, rather than a calamity.

It is delightful to think that the ravages of the great destroyer may have been the means of saving so large a part of the race, and especially of the heathen, from endless ruin. What wonders in God's providence and government of the world will burst upon our minds in connection with this and similar subjects, when we look behind these scenes of suffering and death!

It is not impossible that angels, even now, have new and more perfect views of the wisdom and grace of God as often as they are sent to heathen shores, or into our dwellings, to watch a dying infant, and to bear the unconscious immortal and future seraph from its exposure to certain suffering and liability to eternal misery, to the presence of its God and Saviour.

It must follow, moreover, that we shall probably find the company of the redeemed consisting in a great measure of souls who have grown up in Heaven from infants and young children to the measure of the stature of prophets and apostles. Who, then, can look upon an infant without thinking of the words of Christ, Of such is the kingdom of God!

Parents who meet their children in Heaven, will be more than consoled for their early death. You cannot imagine what happiness is in reserve for you from this source. The child perhaps was taken to Heaven before it could tell its father from a stranger; or it was cut off like a beautiful bud, when the embracement of its leaves is breaking to let forth its bloom.

When you have entered Heaven, you will probably be met by a youthful seraph who will call you father! mother! Is this my child! you will say, at whose death my heart was broken, and God's justice and goodness were almost disputed; in whose little grave I buried all my hopes? As you

wipe the tears of joy from your eyes, you will say: The light affliction, which was but for a moment, works out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Have any of you lost children who are not yourselves pious? The mind of each of those children has been unfolding in Heaven, and has probably grown faster than if on earth. It has been made acquainted with its relation to you, and perhaps it watches every soul that comes up from earth to Heaven, to greet its father or mother. Soon you must appear at the bar of God. You may there have an interview with your child; and suppose that you are there separated from that spirit who has been growing in the knowledge of God and of the universe, anticipating the delightful employment of telling you about Heaven, and leading you among its glorified society, and along its celestial plains!

Perhaps you have a little family there, expecting your arrival. Can you bear the thought of being separated from them in eternity?

Are you an impenitent parent? and have you impenitent children who are growing up without religion? and has God taken away one or more of your children in infancy or early life? Perhaps it was because He saw that your example or neglect would ruin all the family, and He has therefore rescued some of them from destruction by an early death.

But let the joy of meeting those that have gone to Heaven excite you to save your own soul and the souls of your surviving children. Then, though you mourn over their early graves, you shall not sorrow as they that have no hope. 'Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.' Their early death may prove, if you are saved, a source of the richest joy and of praise!

It has been my object in this chapter to represent a few of the interesting associations that belong to infancy, that all may see a pertinency in bestowing that notice upon young children which they receive in the ordinance of Infant Baptism. There are thoughts and feelings of intense interest in every reflecting mind, in connection with an infant: and inasmuch as everything of a spiritual nature which is most interesting to a Christian, is connected in his mind with the Church and the House of God, (as David says of Zion, All my springs are in thee,) it is easy to perceive the cause of that interest which Christians in all ages of the world have felt in the practice of Infant Baptism. The moral relations and influences of this practice will now be considered.

CHAPTER III.

Presentation of an infant for Baptism. Thoughts at the sight. Feelings at an infant's cry in the House of God. Benevolent nature of Christianity illustrated in an infant's baptism. Contrast in this respect of Christianity and heathenism. A child baptized at a heathen river. Interest of the scene to the souls of those who perished there by violence. Beauty and power of infant Baptism in heathen lands. Baptism of infants in a Christian temple. A congregation praying for a child. Effect on the parents. The rite performed.

The *presentation* of an immortal creature in its infancy before God, is deeply interesting to a serious and pious mind. There, in the presence of 'the assembled brethren in Christ,' of angels, of Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, is an infant for the first time in the House of God, the place which, if the child lives to worship there, will forever be as prominent as any other in its recollections of earth. Its unconsciousness of what is doing for it is affecting, and its quiet breathings are in beautiful keeping with the peaceful rite.

Perhaps its cries disturb the prayer, and the composure of the parents. The cry of a child under such circumstances in the House of God,

should never be thought of, either by parents or spectators, but with the same kind of feeling with which we may suppose its Maker hears its voice in His temple. The dedication is not rendered less acceptable to God by the appeal which is made by its cries to his pity.

The parents bring the child to the baptismal font, and the minister invites all present to unite in commending them and the child to God. A whole congregation is attentive to what is taking place on behalf of an unconscious child. Who can behold the sight, and not think of the contrast of the scene with the scenes of infanticide that occur in heathenism? There, thousands perish every week by exposure, or by a violence too horrid to describe. Here, an assembly surround *one* infant, and bear in it their prayers before God. In what point of view could the Christian religion be made to appear in more beautiful contrast to heathenism! How sublime in its simplicity does it seem, when, with all the grandeur of its mysteries into which angels look, it notices an infant, and permits the ordinary worship of God's House to be suspended for a while, that a child may be taken into the covenant of mercy!

Interesting and affecting as this rite may be to us, in Christian lands, it cannot be less interesting when performed by a missionary for the child of a converted heathen, in the presence of Christian and

heathen natives, and of the missionary band. I see them standing on the shore of a river, whose bed for ages past has received the bodies of murdered infants. A father and mother, who perhaps have sacrificed infants in that very stream, now bring a child for Christian baptism. With water from the river, or by immersion in the river, the child is then baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Thus, on those shores where sin has abounded, grace doth much more abound. From Heaven, if he is saved, the reader will probably look down with thrilling interest upon such scenes as these in company with multitudes of spirits to whom that river was the death bed, and is now the grave, of their bodies. The last command of Christ to his disciples, Go teach all nations, baptizing them, will seem to have a most appropriate fulfilment in such a scene.

The baptism of infants must be a delightful and precious ordinance to converted heathen, who, in witnessing it, may be more affected than by anything else with the contrast of the merciful and condescending nature of Christianity, to that of barbarous and wasting heathenism. But let us return to our own temples.

It is the duty of every worshipper to join in the prayer which is offered in behalf of the child, so that the whole church shall send up a cloud of incense to God. Who can tell what effect united

prayer at such a moment may have upon the child's destiny, and thus upon the church and world! How delightful the thought of a whole church, moved by brotherly love, sending up prayers for the child of a brother and sister in Christ! With what pleasure must a parent think of his infant's Baptism beforehand, and at the time of its consecration, if he knows that a whole church will intercede for it with God! and with what pleasure will he recollect, through life and on a dying bed, that the prayers of a church are on record for his particular child!

In the prayer that precedes and follows the Baptism, every brother and sister in the Lord should consider it a duty as well as a privilege to join.

The rite is now to be performed. The minister sprinkles pure water upon the infant's head, and announcing its name, says, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER IV.

Meaning of the Ordinance. Object of rites. The two Christian rites. Use of water in Baptism. Meaning of the form of Baptism. Taking possession of a new land in the name of a king. What is implied on the part of the parents? What is implied on the part of God? Abrahamic covenant only one form of a great and general principle. Encouragement from this in dedicating children. Feelings of parents in retiring from Baptism. Baptism of a household. Limit of age in baptizing children. The refractory child. The widow's household, or infant. Infant of a departed pious mother. Inconsistency of romantic names.

But what is the meaning of this ordinance?

It is natural to man to be affected by rites and ceremonies. No kindred or tribe of men was ever known that did not have them. They impress the mind through several of the senses at once; they interest the feelings, excite the attention, and fix the truth more deeply on the mind than could be done by words without them. Too many ceremonies are burdensome, lead to superstitious observances, and take away the thoughts from what is signified by them, and beget formality. The entire absence of forms is not suited to man's nature, which craves the presence of external objects to rouse and fix his attention and feelings.

The Christian religion contains two sacred rites, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These are admirably fitted to affect the mind, not so much with surprise, or to absorb the thoughts in the outward forms, as to lead them immediately to the things signified, and to fix them in inward meditation.

The use of water rather than anything else is appointed to denote the purifying influence of the Holy Spirit, of whose dispensation Baptism is the sign and seal.

To be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, is as though the subject received a badge with that sacred name upon it, to be worn as a remembrancer to himself, and a witness to others of consecration to God.

When the discoverer of some new land or island takes possession of it in the name of his king, and attaches it to the crown, the same thing is done as when we utter the name of the Godhead in solemn form, and with a sacred rite over a human creature; we assert the property of God in him; and it is only by future rebellion persisted in, that the claim thus asserted will not be followed by the everlasting and glorious indwelling of God in that soul.

Let us consider what is implied in the act of dedicating a child by Baptism, both on the part of the parents and of a covenant God.

1. What is implied on the part of the parents?

Before angels and men, they give up their child

to God, renouncing their own claim to dispose of it, acknowledging that it was originally God's gift, and is now laid upon his altar. It is presumed that they have already given their child to God in their private prayers, and at their family altar, and now they come with the gift in their hands, to do the same before many witnesses.

The parents consecrate their child to God, to Christ, to the Spirit of all Grace! to the service and glory of the sacred Three, whose name is called upon it. It is offered to God, its Father, who made it, and from whose infinite Being, its being came. It is offered to the Saviour, who for it himself became a child, that He might fully sympathize with us, even in our state of infancy, and whose omniscient eye beheld this infant as an object of his redeeming grace, when He gave himself for it. It is offered to the Holy Ghost, by whom it must be born again, and on whom it will depend for holiness even in Heaven.

To the compassion and favor of God, to the promotion of that cause which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are carrying on in the world, the child is solemnly offered and set apart. The consecration is sealed by the sacrament or oath of Baptism.

2. What is implied on the part of a covenant God in his ordinance?

This cannot be better expressed than in the words of the celebrated Shepard, of Cambridge, to his son: "God gave thee the ordinance of Baptism, whereby God is become thy God, and is beforehand with thee, so that if thou wilt return to God, He will undoubtedly receive thee."

In consequence of the parents' relation to God, He stands in a peculiar relation to their child. Children were formerly included with their parents in promises and threatenings, blessings and curses. This is a principle in the government of the world; and when God revived his church in Abraham, this principle came into view, and the admission of children into covenant with their parents, was grafted upon it. It has its foundation in our natures and cannot cease but with the parental relation. So that the question, Whether the Abrahamic covenant is abolished, is lost in the question, Has that principle of the divine government ceased, upon which God formerly included the children of believers in his covenant with their parents?

It is not my intention to discuss the Abrahamic covenant; though it will be mentioned with occasional remarks in the course of the book. I consider it only as one exhibition of a great principle in God's government of the world, which existed before that covenant was made, and will last to the end of time, — I mean, the natural connection of children with their parents in the divine constitution.

So that when a child is solemnly dedicated to God in his House, and with the Christian rite of Baptism, God, in reference to this voluntary acknowledgement of His claims, and from regard to the filial and pious feelings which prompted the consecration, will, in view of His covenant with believers and their seed, receive that child into the number of those to whom He stands in a peculiar relation. A pious parent, whose faith in God and desire for his blessing upon his child leads him to use the ordinance of Baptism with a sincere and prayerful mind, and who follows up his vows with consistent practice, may be sure that the Great Shepherd and Bishop of souls has written the name of that child before Him in letters which His infinite forbearance and mercy will long keep from being blotted out, though the child should perversely break its father's covenant.

Let us now consider the feelings with which parents should retire from the baptismal service.

It is a solemn moment when they take the child away from the Baptism. They have given it to God; and they bear it away, as the mother of Moses did her own son to bring it up for another, who, in this case, is God. They have, by their vows, promised that the will of God concerning their child shall be their will, so that the question of its life or death is left implicitly with Him. Though their hearts will bleed if it should be taken

away, yet, by the baptismal service, they have engaged to consider the child henceforth as entirely at God's disposal; and whenever they look upon it hereafter, the feeling which they are to have is expressed by these words, *Lent, not given.* If it dies, they will remember its Baptism and their vows, and the peace of God that passeth all understanding will steal into their breaking hearts. If it lives, it is to be trained up for that God to whom it has been given.

Suppose that, instead of bringing the child to the altar, the parents had appeared there to receive the child from God, and it had been placed in their hands by ministering spirits who had brought it from the presence of God, and this voice should be heard in the temple: Take this child, and bring it up for me! With what feelings would you retire from such a service? How would you ever after look upon the child? Your vows of consecration, and the expectation of God make the case the same as though the child had been received in this way from Heaven!

It is an affecting sight when a household is offered for Baptism. The feelings of a minister are perhaps never interested more than in laying his hand, with the seal of the covenant, on the head of a boy, and binding his youthful spirit to the altar of God. And when his sister follows him to receive the sacred rite, there is a change in the feelings of

the minister, and of the spectators, to a soft and subduing sympathy.

Within what age may children be presented for Baptism? When the apostles say that they baptized households, it has been the impression of the great body of Christians, that there were children, or servants, or both, in those households who were baptized on the ground of their parents' or masters' profession. I shall not argue this point, but proceed to say: If this were the case, we deduce this principle from it; Baptism may be given in all cases where the parent or master has such control over the subject, that he can carry out in his subsequent treatment of him the dedication to God, which was signified in asking for and receiving the ordinance.

Suppose that a youth, whose father is dead, and whose mother is recently converted, is refractory at her proposal to offer him in Baptism? I put the case because it has occurred. The greater pains should be taken to soften and subdue his spirit. He is probably a grief to his mother in his daily conduct, and takes advantage of his having no father to govern him. Now there is a good opportunity to affect him with religious considerations. Let the minister be made acquainted with the case. He will appeal to his feelings towards his widowed mother, his departed father, and will try to remove the shame which he feels at the thought of being

taunted for his baptism by his wicked playmates. Their influence over him, and thus the dreadful snare which the fear of others brings with it, may now be broken, and preparation may be made for religious influences to reach his heart.

Who can behold the Baptism of a widow's household, and especially of her infant, without tears! How appropriate to her situation and feelings is this ordinance, in which her children are cast upon the bosom of the church by that God who says, A father of the fatherless and the judge of the widows is God in his Holy Habitation!

A mother died and left an infant. Soon after, the father appeared with it in the House of God, and in the name of the departed mother, and his own, offered it in Baptism. One glorified spirit, at least, if not a cloud of witnesses, we may suppose, was moved at such a sight.

The names which are sometimes given to children in Baptism, are so romantic that they seem to have been taken from a novel. This is inconsistent with the motive and the state of mind, with which parents are supposed to offer their children in Baptism.

CHAPTER V.

Principles in the treatment and education of a Baptized child. 1. Frequent renewal of the consecration. 2. Praying with a child. Influence of it on a child. Mode of proceeding. The child's appearance at prayer. Its impressions of the nature of the act. Influence of prayer before a child in correction and encouragement. John Newton's testimony respecting his mother's prayers. Duty of a *father* to pray with his child. Interesting sight. Effect on the parent's mind and feelings. Influence of it on the child's feelings towards its father. 3. The child taught the meaning of its Baptism. Good opportunity when the child has witnessed a Baptism. God's attention to the young. Moses, in the ark by the Nile, preserved and restored to his mother. Moses on Sinai. Connection of his goodness and greatness, with God's notice of him when a child. Call of Samuel in the Temple. God's notice of children at their Baptism. Influence of these thoughts upon a Baptized child. 4. Influence of Baptism on the parents in directing the child. Maternal associations. General influence of a sincere consecration of children upon parental conduct. Inconsistent conduct of many parents. Wrong motives in Baptism. Effects. Parents punished in their children. Apostacy of children. Appeal to the parent of a Baptized child. Summary view of motives and feelings in offering a child for Baptism. Annanias and Sapphira, or the guilt of insincerity in a free-will offering. The service delightful as well as solemn.

What are some of the principles upon which the parents will feel it their duty to train up the Baptized child?

1. They will frequently renew the dedication of the child to God.

They will not regard the Baptism as a mere ceremony, but as the commencement of obligations of which they will be reminded, and thereby excited to faithfulness, as often as they remember the Baptism. They will frequently lift up their thoughts to God imploring his help in the discharge of their solemn trust. As often as their affections are moved by watching its slumbers or its first motions which betray its helplessness and excite a mingled love and pity, they will raise a silent prayer for the love and favour of God to rest upon it. The recollection of the solemn and impressive ordinance of Baptism, and the sight of the little creature that was the subject of such a scene, will make them think that the soul which has taken up its habitation in the child was all that gave the ordinance its propriety; and the attention that was bestowed upon the child in admitting it to such an ordinance will invest that soul in their thoughts with something of its unutterable value. The dawn of its being will be consecrated by frequent and fervent prayer.

2. The parents will begin early to pray with the child.

The object of this will be to lead the thoughts of the child as soon as possible to that God between

whom and the child a solemn and affecting relation has been instituted by Baptism.

The parents of a baptized child who do not pray *with* it, as well as for it, neglect a most important part of their duty. This is the best of all methods to teach a child the nature and duty, and to form in it the habit, of prayer. As soon as a child begins to pray intelligently, it assumes upon itself the obligations of its Baptism, and God hears its voice and thinks of his covenant. The first thing that the parents of a baptized child can do to carry out the design of the Baptism, is, to pray *with* the child.

It is surprising to see how early a child may be made to understand something about prayer, at least so far as to feel that there is something sacred and solemn in the act. Let a parent when alone with the child, and the child is in a pleasant mood, ask it to kneel with him, and fold its hands; or if it cannot kneel, let the parent kneel, and place his hand on the head of the child, and utter simple words aloud. Let the look of the parent be such as it naturally will be while speaking with his Maker. The child will be impressed with the apparent absence of the parent's manner, while it hears its own name from his lips; and will look up with childish wonder. Soon, when invited to go and pray, it will run to the well-known place,

and the parent, by frequently repeating the practice, will exert an influence upon the child as lasting as eternity. When the child has done wrong, after convincing it of its sin, kneel with it before God, mingle your complaint and sorrow for its sin with words and tones of affection, and upon the softened feelings of the child there will be made an impression of its accountability to this unseen Power that can never be effaced. And when the child has been remarkably good, kneel with it in the same manner, and use some affectionate expressions of commendation and of thankfulness, so that prayer may be associated in the child's mind with its happiest moments, and its thoughts of God be of one who loves goodness as much as He hates sin.

John Newton testifies, that, in the midst of his infidelity and debauchery, he would sometimes seem to feel the pressure of his mother's hand upon his head, — though when she prayed with him, he was too young to understand her words; but the pressure of that hand followed him in his manhood, and was one of the means of bringing him to God. No Christian mother should omit this practice; it is one of the mightiest means of good that God has ordained.

But the father of a baptized child should, more especially, perform this delightful service with his child. The respect which a child feels for its

father, and its filial fear towards him, will impress it very deeply upon the child's memory. Can there be a more interesting sight to Heaven than that of a *man* kneeling before God, at the side of a little child? If the eyes of the parent in prayer could be opened, — considering the views which are entertained in Heaven of true greatness as beginning in that which, to sinful creatures, is humility, it would not be strange if he should see a ministering angel beckoning to his fellows to come and see the sight, and presently there should be a circle of heavenly spectators around a scene of such moral beauty and true greatness. How like Christ is a parent when he is not ashamed of humbling himself to the condition and feelings of a child! No act of worship can better soften the feelings or soothe them when ruffled by the cares and business of life, or bring the presence of God more sensibly near to the soul than for a man to commune with God for and with his child. That child will revere your memory when you are dead. You may be great in honour or riches amongst men, but none of these things will sanctify your memory, or so perpetuate your influence with your child as your having kneeled with it before God. In after life, yea, through eternity, you will be associated with its first thoughts of its Maker!

You may send that child from you, hereafter, and whether in foreign lands, or on the ocean, or

in scenes of temptation and danger at home, or in the quiet walks of preparation for future life, the thoughts of you will rise before its mind like good angels, and though dead, you will yet speak to it.

Let every father and mother, who bring their child to the altar of God in Baptism, follow out the influence of the solemn and delightful scene, by repeating the dedication of the child in secret, and by making the impression on its mind that it stands in a solemn relation to Almighty God. This will be done effectually, with God's blessing, by frequently appealing to its Maker in the child's presence and in its behalf, and by connecting its name with the posture and words of supplication.

3. The parents will early teach the child the nature and meaning of its Baptism.

It will be natural to use those occasions for this purpose when the child's curiosity and interest are excited by witnessing the Baptism of children.

In connection with this ordinance, the sight of which will impress all that is said upon the child's mind, it will be highly profitable to teach the child the notice bestowed by its Maker upon infants and young children. Of this, the Baptism of an infant in the name of its God can be shown to be an affecting illustration. As parallel to it, and an illustration of the same divine regard for infants, the history of Moses may be made familiar to the child. It was the Maker of Heaven and earth that

directed the mother of Moses to prepare that ark for her infant son; it was God that led her with it to the side of the river; it was God that watched the child as the swelling tide was rocking the ark, that no monster of the deep should be attracted by its cry; it was God that led the princess to that part of the river where the ark was; and when the babe wept, it was God that softened her heart. And what an affecting instance of the goodness of God, that when the princess sent to call a nurse, He should have directed her, amongst the thousands of Israelitish women, to the child's own mother!

All these incidents can be so represented to a child as to give it delightful views of the condescension of God, and to make it feel that He does notice even an infant. Speak of him that was a babe in the ark amongst the bulrushes, as afterward on the top of Sinai; and by this and other thrilling events in the life of Moses, connect the notice and care which God took of him, an infant, with his future usefulness and greatness. It will then appear to the child a most interesting and important, as well as solemn thing to have been presented to God in Baptism.

If the child had advanced beyond infancy when it was baptized, the call of young Samuel in the temple by his Maker, and his subsequent goodness and greatness, may be used to illustrate God's

notice of children at every period of childhood, and the effect in after life of having the notice and favour of God when we are young.

By these instructions, a child may be led to regard its Baptism with feelings of the deepest interest. The thought that God once looked upon it in His House, an unconscious child, and that prayers were offered in its behalf, and then, that in accordance with God's special regard for the children of the pious in all ages of the world, He gave it Baptism, and permitted His name to be called upon it, will have a tendency to bring Jehovah near to the child as its condescending God and friend, and will help to remove that dread of God which sin occasions ; — to subdue which, and to inspire us with confidence in himself as a God willing to forgive, was one of the leading objects in the incarnation and life of Christ, and is a great design in all the ordinances of the Gospel.

As the child grows up, the parents will be careful to make it understand what they did when they offered it in Baptism. They will teach it, first, that they gave it away to God, and that He has the first claim upon it. In speaking with the child about its future life, they will make it feel that in giving it up in Baptism they intended the consecration of its whole existence to God, and that they shall inquire at every step of its progress for the

will of God concerning it, and bring it up on principles which they believe Christ will sanction. They will keep this impression on the child's mind, that God is its proprietor, and that they are acting for God; and they will thus lead the child by their example to say, 'My Father, thou art the guide of my youth.'

Then, in the second place, they will teach it that its Baptism was permitted by its Maker, as a seal and token that He is willing to be its God and portion; that He was mindful of it from the first moment of its existence, and received it when it was cast upon his arms at its birth; and that having thus signified his willingness to be its God, and have it for his child, it has every inducement to love God and no excuse for impenitence and irreligion. 'God gave thee the ordinance of Baptism whereby God is become thy God and is beforehand with thee, so that if thou wilt return to God, He will undoubtedly receive thee.'

Other thoughts upon this topic will be found in another place addressed to the baptized child.

4. The parents will remember the consecration of their child in Baptism and their covenant vows, when deciding questions of duty in governing or advising their child.

The general principles already stated will be applied in particular cases by the help of knowledge gained from various sources, to be guided by a

sound discretion. One of the best helps in a Christian education of children is the 'Maternal Association' of modern times, composed of pious mothers who meet to converse on the subject of the management of children, to compare the various experience of difficulties, trials and success; the little expedients that have been resorted to in the family to secure obedience, subdue obstinacy, produce repentance, and encourage good dispositions. Each mother gains in this way an amount of practical knowledge that differs from the information that books give, as coin does from wedges of gold and silver.

Then, the united prayers of these parents, to whom God has committed 'the Hope of the Church,' are, without doubt, heard in Heaven with a peculiar interest.

If any parent has a child in circumstances of danger, or that seems to stand in need of special prayer, (and what child does not?) it would seem that the privilege of securing the prayers of a circle of pious mothers, who know so well from natural instinct how to intercede for a child, would be sufficient to induce every Christian mother to be a member of such a circle.

In deciding questions relating to management, education, amusements, and other things, an enlightened conscience may be trusted for right decisions, being guarded on the one hand against

narrow views of duty by information gained from pious and intelligent sources of instruction, and against worldliness on the other, by the fear of God, the remembrance of covenant vows, and the professed intention of living and of educating the child, for eternity. While the parents will seek the greatest usefulness of the child, they will be restrained by their covenant vows from placing it in situations of temptation, or where there is imminent danger that errour and sin may frustrate all that the grace of God may have done for it. 'Lead me not into temptation,' will be a prayer which the parents will frequently offer as a safeguard to the ambitious desire of seeing the child prosper in the world at the risk of its salvation. They will regard the fear of the Lord, a conscientious love of truth, of purity, of goodness, secured by the regeneration of the soul, and the increasing strength of religious principle as the pearl of great price to be sought for their child. If its wishes are worldly, and it manifests a taste for light and frivolous things, and seeks amusements which the parents know are dangerous to the soul, they will not hesitate a moment in bringing parental authority, in a judicious manner, to bear upon the child's conscience, and will fortify themselves against the danger of yielding to its perverse inclinations from mistaken affection or weakness, by remembering the baptismal vows, and the oft-repeated covenant with God.

God will strengthen the parents' authority who thus throw themselves upon His covenant in times of difficulty and trial with their children. The question by which a parent can best judge of his treatment of his child in all cases of doubtful expediency, is this, *How shall I wish that I had acted in this case, when my child is giving its Maker, in my hearing, at His bar, an account of my intercourse with it on earth?* Carry yourself and your child in this way in imagination before your final Judge, and settle every religious scruple under impressions borrowed from that hour.

It is affecting and painful to consider that some parents who have offered their children to God in Baptism, seem as if they were educating them for Satan. All the principles upon which they bring them up are worldly; every question of duty is settled with no regard to the christian standard of propriety; and in short, they have no more reference to the will of God, or to his honour or glory in connection with their children, than though there were no God.

Why did they offer their children in Baptism? Merely for the sake of carrying them into the public assembly, and giving them their names; and probably they never think of the Baptism afterward, unless reminded of it by seeing the dress which the child wore on the occasion, or by some other accident.

There is great guilt in such conduct; it is mocking God with an offering which they did not intend to make, and have accordingly withheld.

Can we suppose that the child who is thus presented, and whose education corresponds with the careless manner in which it was offered, is received into covenant? Or if God, in pity towards the unconscious creature thus trifled with in this solemn scene of its spiritual history, *does* take the child into his covenant, the parents may be made to feel the consequences of their neglect by having the child a scourge and torment to them many years, though it be saved at last as by fire. When we see the undutiful and cruel conduct of the children of Christian parents, especially when we see them piercing their parents' hearts with many sorrows in choosing a professed belief and a place of worship which their parents disapprove, we cannot but ask, Did these parents really covenant with God concerning their child? or if they did, Have they been covenant-breakers? Does He not call himself a covenant-keeping God, and has there not been some fault with them that the blessings of the covenant are not realized?

Some Christian parents seem to regard their children's apostacy with little or no concern, and perhaps never remonstrated with them when they first discovered their inclination to forsake the guide of their youth, and the covenant of their God, but let them

imbibe errour, and take up with forms of unbelief that dishonour their God and Saviour, without even the weak reproof of Eli, 'Nay, do not so my sons.'

Have you not solemnly given your children to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? and can you permit them to violate their Baptism without strong efforts and prayers to bind them to the covenant that was made for them with Heaven? God has entrusted their immortal interests to your care. You must one day surrender your charge at his bar, when He will say, Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward!

In view of what has been said, the feelings with which parents bring their children for Baptism should be those of serious consideration, and great solemnity. They come to take a most important charge upon themselves, as lasting as the possibility of influencing their children. It is not a formal service upon which they attend; it is to receive the oath of Heaven upon themselves in regard to their offspring, and to assume obligations which are to affect the interests of the children for eternity. Parents, therefore, should not come to the baptismal service until they are impressed with the nature of the service in which they are about to engage, and the extent of the promise and covenant which they are about to make. As it is a voluntary service, they should be the more careful to do it acceptably

and with godly fear. The two victims of falsehood who fell dead at Peter's feet, were especially guilty, because the offering which they counterfeited was voluntary and not by constraint. If you see fit to withhold your children from Baptism, it is in your power to do so, and the consequence will indeed be a loss to your own soul and to them. But if you propose to make this voluntary offering, you must be sincere and unreserved in the consecration, and faithful afterward, for it will be better for you not to vow than to vow and not pay.

But the feelings of the parents should not be exclusively those of overwhelming responsibility. They should come to the service with joy. They have an immortal soul committed to their care, and it will be a relief to their feelings if they may secure the assistance and blessing of their Maker in training it up for Heaven. By dedicating the child to God, and making use of his appointed ordinance of Baptism, they secure for the child the special notice of God. He also enters into engagements respecting it. This will not lessen the sense of responsibility in the parents, but will increase it, and at the same time mingle with it a feeling of hope and confidence that will strengthen their faith and efforts.

CHAPTER IV.

Benefits of Infant Baptism. Benefits to the Parents. I. Deep impression of parental obligations. Use of a public consecration. Answer to an objection. Use of the ordinance of Baptism. Objection answered. II. Pleasure and satisfaction afforded by the ordinance. The Baptism a new bond for the parents to the love and service of God. Influence of the Baptism upon the mind in thinking of the future. Death of the parents while the child is young. The dying scene. Influence of the Baptism on the mind of a dying parent. Influence of it upon the parent at the loss of a child. Reasons. III. Ground of religious appeal. Trait in childhood to which an appeal drawn from its Baptism may be made. God's notice of it when an infant. Prayers of a Church for it.

Benefits to the child. Objections considered. Investing property for an infant. Unconsciousness of a benefit no objection to it. Right of parents to benefit a child without its consent. I. Baptism of a child properly performed, secures to the child the favour of God. Simple view of this truth. II. Prayers of the Church. Influence of these prayers. III. Influence of Baptism on the child by its influence on the parents. IV. Thought of its Baptism in after life, a ground of hope and prayer. Testimony of Matthew Henry.

The benefits of Infant Baptism may be considered, 1. In reference to the parents, and 2. To the child.

The benefits to the parents are as follows.

1. The solemn baptismal service in the presence of many witnesses is fitted to impress very deeply upon the parents their obligations and promises in regard to their children.

Some may say, If we dedicate our child to God at home, what is the use of a public consecration?

We may ask in reply, If you dedicate yourselves to God in your closets, what is the use of a public profession of religion? You can readily answer the latter question. 'I must profess Christ before men. God expects me to own my obligations to serve Him before the world. I must do good by my example. I shall be restrained from sin, and prompted to duty, by remembering my public profession.'

These reasons may be applied in the case of Infant Baptism. You must avouch the Lord Jehovah, Father, Son and Holy Ghost to be the God and portion of your children, before angels and men. The recollection of what you have done, will excite you to greater faithfulness. The vows in public will have tenfold more effect upon your mind than those which are made in private.

But some say, Why make use of Baptism in consecrating children to God? Why not bring them to the House of God, and have public prayers for them without using the form of Baptism? We may ask again in reply, Why use the ordinance of the Lord's Supper when we would in a particular

manner remember the Lord Jesus? Why not come to the House of God, have prayers and a sermon suited to bring the Saviour near to the mind, and not use the ordinance of the Supper? The ready answer which every one will give, is, There is something in the sight of the ordinance, in taking consecrated emblems into our hands, that affects the mind more deeply with the thoughts of Christ, than silent meditation could ever do. Our minds are affected through the senses. God remembers this in appointing the ordinances of his worship, and while He does not burden us with forms and ceremonies, He retains the use of them to a limited extent in Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The parent feels that Baptism is of divine appointment, and is deeply impressed by using the divine rite for his child; and the minister, standing before the parents in the place of God, and in His name placing the seal of Heaven upon the infant, exerts a greater influence upon the parent than any exhortations could do without the ordinance.

2. Another benefit to the parents, of Infant Baptism, is, The pleasure and satisfaction afforded by the ordinance.

A Christian parent who loves his child will ever think of its Baptism with delight. It is a satisfaction to know that he has given up his child into the hands of God, and that God has engaged to be,

in a special manner, the God of him and of his seed. So that the service is a blessing to the parent, in the feelings which it occasions towards God, as standing in a new relation to him through the child. A father and mother are conscious of a new bond of love in and through their children. Thus the dedication of a child to God, and his admission of it into his covenant, makes a new tie for a parent's heart to the love and service of his Maker.

Whenever a parent, who has had his child baptized, feels anxious in regard to the future, the recollection of the baptismal covenant will quiet his mind. If the parents die while the child is young, the remembrance of its dedication to God, and the confident belief that it was received into his covenant, will help them to look at it from the dying pillow, with peace. What a scene is this! A parent is dying. The children are brought in. God only can describe the emotions of the parent in casting the eye upon the children, so unconscious of what is happening to them in losing a parent, so ignorant of what the parent knows to be the dangers of the world. In prayer, the dying saint expresses his desire for the blessing of God upon his children. But if he can remember that when he was in health and strength, he did with sincerity dedicate those children to God, in His House, and that he had reason to believe that God received

them into his covenant, and if their dedication has been followed up by a consistent treatment of his children, he will have a feeling of preparation and readiness to die, so far as his children are concerned, like that which he has when he remembers that he has not neglected repentance till the dying hour. Dying parents have frequently spoken of their children's Baptism in a way that showed it to be one of the richest sources of comfort this side of Heaven. If parents would always regard this service with proper feelings, and make it more of a religious service than many do, it would strengthen them when flesh and heart are failing.

But how does the recollection of the mere service of Baptism add anything to the comfort of a dying parent?

Though a Christian relies upon the evidences of piety which his whole life affords, yet in times of trouble, and especially in death, he recurs with pleasure to seasons of special covenanting with God. Every one who has not been superficial in his Christian experience, has had times of peculiar enjoyment in his religious life, days of fasting and prayer, or other seasons of particular interest, when it seemed to him that he had clear evidence of knowing God and of being known of Him. To these seasons the mind recurs in death with joy and hope, though the general evidence of being a child of God, which the life and conduct affords, is by no

means to be overlooked. So it is a relief to parents in death to look back to one particular act of consecration made solemn by the services of the House of God and of the Sabbath.

3. Another benefit to parents of baptizing their children is, It affords them in after life a ground of religious appeal to the conscience and affections of the child.

A trait in childhood, perhaps as strongly marked as any other, is a love of affectionate notice from others. It is probable that the reader, recurring to the scenes of early life, will find that those who showed him special kindness in childhood made an impression upon his mind which is amongst his deepest impressions of love and gratitude. To this peculiarity in the child's mind, the fact of having been admitted by God to his special notice and covenant, makes a strong appeal. The parent tells the child that in infancy it was presented to God, and its Maker was invoked by a whole congregation on its behalf, and that God from that time regarded it as in a peculiar sense His child; that now the child is under special obligations to love and serve that God who was kind to it when it was helpless, and had mercy on it when it was offered to Him in His House; that for a whole church to have prayed to God for it, and for God to have heard their prayer, makes it a very dreadful thing for the child to be otherwise than good, and that if it is inclined

to be good, it may be sure that God, who remembers its Baptism and his covenant, will rejoice to help its endeavours. The parents will find great assistance in appealing to their child's feelings, if they can thus refer in particular to one special act of God's favour towards the child. When it has witnessed the Baptism of another child, it may be made to understand that all which was done for that infant on the part of God, the parents, and the church, was done for itself in its infancy, and thence an appeal can be made to the child's feelings and conscience which may never be forgotten.

Benefits to the Child.

After what has been said, no one will question the benefits of Infant Baptism, even though they should be no other than those which we have seen come to the child through the parents.

But some ask, Of what benefit is the ordinance to an unconscious infant?

Suppose that a friend should propose to invest property for your infant, and should wish you to sign certain papers, would you say, Of what benefit can this ceremony be to an unconscious child? Would you indulge in expressions of ridicule at the thought of doing such a thing for 'a senseless child'?

Suppose that in a circle that had met for prayer, a mother should ask you to offer a special prayer for the young children of those who were present, would you say, Of what benefit can it be to the children who are unconscious that we are praying for them?

Is nothing useful to a person unless he is conscious of it at the time when it is done for him?

But what right have the parents thus to make engagements for the child without its consent?

The answer is found in the general principle that *we may benefit another without his consent.*

This principle is often acted upon in private instances of charity. The only question that remains then, is, Is it benefitting the child or not, to surround him in infancy with such influences as, when he grows up, will incline him to believe the Christian religion, and to love and serve God? If there is any improper interference with the child's freedom in so doing, we must do nothing for our children in the way of moral influence until they may have grown beyond that influence, and have had time to be corrupted and ruined.

The benefit to a child of infant Baptism may be seen in several particulars.

1. It secures to the child the special favour of God.

This is on the supposition that the consecration is made by the parents in sincerity, in faith, and is

followed by consistent conduct. If God has not in any manner signified His will that the admission of children into covenant with Him, through their parents, should cease, — and this we nowhere find that He has done, — the baptized child is of course received into a special relation to God.

Suppose, however, that there had never been such a thing as admitting the children of believers into a peculiar relation, through their parents, to God. We should still feel authorized to practise infant Baptism, and should believe that it secured the special favour of God to a child; and on the following grounds: Baptism is the sign of separation to the Christian faith; there is no command to *restrict* it to believers: 'Believe and be baptized, no more excludes an infant from Baptism, than 'believe and be saved,' excludes it from salvation; the apostles baptized households, and it is as probable that there were children in them, as that there were not. There is nothing in the nature of Baptism, in our view, to hinder it from being given to any, at the request of a responsible Christian applicant who has the rightful authority and a professed religious qualification and disposition, to carry out in his treatment of the subject of Baptism, the solemn and important meaning of the ordinance.

Now God is a hearer of prayer. He enters into covenant with those who in a suitable manner

covenant with Him. If a Christian parent brings a child into the House of God, and receives upon the child the sign of separation to the Christian faith, thereby entering into solemn covenant with God to bring up that child for Him, and praying God to take it into his special care, we cannot doubt that there is a peculiar relation instituted between that child and God. We believe that the act of dedication would secure it, if the Abrahamic covenant had never been mentioned.

But when, in addition to this, we believe, as we have before observed, that God still regards the children of his people as in covenant with Him, we are fully authorized in saying that the pious and faithful performance of the act of infant consecration by Baptism, secures to the child the special favour of God.

2. It secures to the child the prayers of the church at the time of the Baptism, at the Lord's table, and in the circles for prayer.

The fact of the public consecration of the children to God, and of their holding by this means a peculiar relation to God and to the church, has a tendency to interest the feelings of the churches in children.

The connection between these prayers and their effects, may not be traced out by the child in this world; but in Heaven he may see the connection

of preservations, and blessings, and of salvation, with the prayers of the church in his behalf, secured by his being a child of the covenant.

3. Infant Baptism, if properly understood and performed by the parents, will secure to the child the highest measure of pious parental influence.

Anything that will make parents faithful and prayerful with their children is of great benefit to the child. Who can speak of the value of pious parents to a child! How many of our race will place this in their future songs of praise as the first of earthly blessings!

We have seen that the influence of Infant Baptism on a parent is one of the most powerful means to secure faithfulness in bringing up the child for God. It is therefore an important benefit to a child to be baptized by pious, conscientious parents; and none but those who trust they are such, we should hope, would baptize their children.

4. The thoughts of its Baptism will afford the child a ground of hope and prayer in after life, and especially at the time of its conversion.

There are moments, especially when the Spirit of God is striving with us, when anything that can keep the soul from despair, and encourage hope, is of great importance. At such times it will be natural for a child who has been faithfully taught the nature of his Baptism, and the relation in which he thereby stands to God and God to him,

to appeal to his Maker on the ground of the covenant made for him by his parents. 'O Lord, I am thy servant; I am thy servant and the son of of thine handmaid.' 'Thou art the God that took me from my birth; I was cast upon thee when a child.' Who can doubt that a child that has been told that it was baptized, and has been made to understand what Baptism implies, will find occasions through life, and some of them having a momentous bearing upon his destiny, when he will be led with great effect to plead the covenant of a covenant-keeping God?

Here, as a specimen of the testimony of pious men to the influence of their Infant Baptism in after life, I will quote the testimony of Matthew Henry. "I cannot but take occasion to express my gratitude to God for my Infant Baptism: not only as it was an early admission into the visible body of Christ, but as it furnished my parents with a good argument, and I trust, through grace, a prevailing argument, for an early dedication of myself to God in my childhood. *If God has wrought any good work upon my soul, I desire with humble thankfulness, to acknowledge the influence of my infant Baptism upon it.**

* Life, 60 p. I. Vol., Commentary. London, 1828.

CHAPTER VII.

To a Baptized Child. God's favour in infancy. The scene of Baptism. God's notice of the child. The Saviour's feelings. His recollections of his own infancy. His interest in the dedication of an infant. His thoughts at the sight. The prayer. God remembers the Baptism. His feelings towards the baptized child. His wishes for its welfare. Kindness of God to the child. The child must have confidence in God's feelings towards it. God regards the baptized child as His own. His rejection of it, if it will not love and serve Him.

To a Baptized Youth. God's favour in infancy. The piety of the youth supposed. Duty of a Baptized pious youth. God's interview with Solomon. Observance of the Anniversary of Baptism. An impenitent baptized youth. Expostulation. Death of one or both of the youth's parents. Thoughts and feelings of the parent in Heaven. Meeting of an impenitent baptized youth and the glorified parent. Address of the parent. The farewell. Contrast to such experience upon repentance. Appeal to the youth whose parents are living. A pious youth at his parent's dying bed. Parents at the dying bed of a pious child. Meeting of a pious child with his parents in Heaven after a life of usefulness. Form of consecration. Appeal to one who has renounced his parents' faith.

To a Baptized Child.

Perhaps you were an infant, asleep, when you were brought to the House of God to be baptized. You of course knew nothing of what was doing

for you. But God who is everywhere present, saw you when you came into His House. The Saviour saw you, and remembered that He was once an infant like you, in the arms of his mother. Whenever an infant is brought into the House of God, it must be that the Saviour looks at it with great kindness and love. When He was on earth, infants were brought to Him that He might touch them, and He said, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Now the Bible says that Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; and of course, He has the same feelings towards children now as He had on earth.

Without doubt, the Saviour looked down upon you with great tenderness, when you were brought into the House of God to be baptized.

Perhaps He thought, as He looked upon you, "Here is an infant: it does not know where it is, or what they are doing with it. But it has a soul which is to live forever, and it will grow to be like an angel, or a wicked spirit. This is one of the souls for which I died on Calvary. Its father or mother, or both, love me, and I love them; and they have come to give me this child, that it may have my blessing, and if it grows up, be good and useful in the world. I will look into the parents' hearts and see if they really wish me to take the child to be mine; and if they do, I will.

I will hear the prayers which are offered for the child, and if it is good as it grows up, it shall be a lamb in my flock."

Then the congregation rose, and the minister prayed that the Saviour would take you to be His child and love you forever. He prayed that you might live, and know Christ, and what He has done for you; that you might early be pious, a comfort to your parents, and a blessing to a great many souls, and that you might be seen in Heaven with your parents praising God. Then he said what your parents would have said if they had spoken: GOD, Thou hast given us this child; and we come to give it up to Thee. Thou madest it, and hast breathed its soul into it, and it belongs to Thee, and to Thee it shall be given. Look upon this child as consecrated to Thee, and help us to remember, when we carry it away, that we are to take care of it for God, and to teach it how to love and please God early. We give it to the Saviour, who himself was once a child; who came into the world to save sinners, and who wishes to save this child. We promise that we will begin early to teach it about the Saviour, and we will endeavor to make it feel that it has been given to Christ, and that it will be delightful for it to love Him early, and to be loved, as it will then be, by Him.

When it grows up, let it not forget God. If its father and mother die when it is young, take care

of it, and remember that we have given it to Thee. If it shall be wicked, and will not love what is right, and dies wicked, we know that God must shut it out of Heaven, for Thou hast said, 'If you seek me, I will be found of thee, but if you forsake me, I will cast thee off forever.'

But, may this child live in Heaven with us, having been good and useful in the world. When it is old enough to understand what was done to it, its being baptized shall make it feel that it belongs to Christ, and that it cannot refuse to love Him without being ungrateful to the Saviour, who was kind to it when an infant. May its Baptism always come to its mind when it shall be tempted to do or say anything wicked. May it remember that God still sees it, as He did when it was baptized, and that He will be grieved with it if it is not good, but will love it if it is a good child, and take care of it, and Christ will prepare a place for it in Heaven.

Then you were baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

It was the same as though the minister said, "We give this child to God the Father;" and God the Father had answered, so that all the congregation could hear, "I will love and bless this child, if it does not refuse my love now promised to it;" and the minister had added, We give this child to its Saviour, Jesus Christ; and Christ had answered,

"Of such is the kingdom of God; — I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me": We give this child to the Holy Ghost; and the Holy Ghost had breathed His blessing upon you.

God remembers your Baptism. He has often looked to see if your parents teach you, and pray with you, as they promised they would do, when they carried you away from the Baptism, as a child given them to bring up for Heaven.

God remembers your Baptism. Perhaps you pray to Him when you are alone. He hears your voice and looks into your heart, and knows how you feel. For when you were baptized He made this promise, If you seek me I will be found of you.

Now though you are young, God knows you and sees you. The same God that watched the infant Moses when he lay in his ark by the river side, and kept him safe till the king's daughter found him and gave him back to his mother, watches you when you sleep, and when you wake, and all day long. The same God that was in the temple where Samuel slept, and that spoke in the night, and said, 'Samuel! Samuel!' now sees you; and indeed you are never out of his sight.

God wishes you to come to Heaven with your parents when you die, and there He will make you happy. And now He wishes you to begin to love Him and pray to Him, and He will certainly love

you. He wishes you to be good to your parents, always to mind what they say, and never to do anything that will give them pain.

He wishes you to be kind and gentle to other children; to do what is right before them, so as to make them love God. He wishes you to read the Bible, for it is His book, and to think much of what you read. He wishes you to love the Saviour, and to think what that Saviour has done for you in becoming a child like you, and at last dying, that your sins and ours may be forgiven. Is it not kind in God thus to think of you, and to wish so much to make you happy? It is very kind. Of course you wish to thank Him when you pray to Him, and ask Him to be your friend forever, and to help you to be as good as He and your parents wish you to be.

You must never feel that God is not willing to hear your prayers. You must never be afraid to pray to Him; if you have done wrong, you must go to Him, as well as to your parents, and confess your sin and forsake it. He loves to forgive children when they repent, and if you ask Him, He will help you to be good when you are tempted to sin. I have only one thing more to say. *God looks upon you as His child.* Your parents gave you to Him, when you were baptized. The minister and the church gave you to God in their prayers. Angels from Heaven saw you when you

were given to God. Now, will you not be a child of God? If you will, He will certainly love you. If you are not willing, but prefer to be wicked, you must know that all who are not the children of God, are called in the Bible the children of the Wicked One. And all such must be sent away after death, to live with that wicked one. But God will keep you from him, if you will give yourself to God as your parents gave you to Him when you were baptized. He will defend you while you live, so that nothing will happen to you which will not in the end be good for you. He will at last give you a place at His right hand in Heaven, there to be happy without end. You must therefore make no delay, but immediately go before God in prayer, and ask Him to be your God, and tell Him that you would be His child.

To a Baptized Youth.

You have grown up beyond childhood, and have long been old enough to know and love God. You have been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and God engaged at your Baptism to be your God, if you would be his child. He gave you to pious parents that you might early be taught to love and fear Him. It was a special favour to you that God gave you to pious parents.

Have you ever given yourself to God to be His child? Do you love God, and do you hope that He loves you? Are you ever so happy as when you have prayed, confessing your sins and asking God to forgive and love you? Are you confident that when you die, God will take you to Heaven, and does it give you joy to think of being in Heaven with God? If so, you have the highest reason to be thankful and happy. What return can you make to God for his kindness to you? It is your duty and privilege to devote yourself to God's service and glory. It should be your great question, How can I best please God? Make this question the rule by which you live, and by which you form your plans for future life. For, you are not your own; you have been consecrated to God; you belong to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, by the covenant of Baptism. What an honour to be thus related to your Maker! Now let it be your chief desire to do and to be that which will best please God.

If you ask Him to direct you for this purpose, He will be pleased to do it. You remember the story of Solomon. God appeared to him in the night and said, Ask what I shall do for thee. And Solomon prayed for heavenly wisdom that he might in the highest and best manner glorify God. And God said, Because thou hast not asked riches,

wealth, nor honour, nor long life — wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee, and I will give thee riches and wealth and honour.

Now God says, 'In all thy ways acknowledge me, and I will direct thy paths.' If you thus acknowledge Him, you may confidently say, 'Thou wilt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.'

Beside your daily prayers of consecration to God, it will be profitable for you to find out the day when you were baptized, and keep that day yearly, as a special season of thanksgiving, and of renewing your consecration to God. You will not forget to do the same on your birthday, consecrating, with solemn prayer, your body, soul and spirit, to God, and thinking how solemn and important a thing it is to have been born; and that the favour of God alone can prevent it from being an everlasting and dreadful curse, and that with his blessing, eternal life in Heaven will be the delightful and glorious consequence.

Thus, till you die, as we trust you will through eternity, bless and praise God for your Baptism, and renew that consecration through life, and in your dying hour, which, in the morning of your life was like the dew of Heaven upon your spirit.

It may be, that my young friend is not yet a Christian. You have never acknowledged the

consecration which your parents made of you when you were baptized. God has been waiting for you to do it. To-day, He will rejoice to keep His covenant with you, if you will call upon Him in prayer.

Perhaps the father or mother who held you in their arms when you were baptized, is dead. Those lips can no longer pray for you; that hand can no more press yours in prayer; the heart that beat with joy at the sound of your young footsteps is still; the eye that shed tears for you, that you might not perish, is closed till the judgment day.

But in Heaven your parent thinks of you continually. That departed spirit looks round upon Heaven, and says, Will my child dwell here with me? It sees whole families, in little circles, in Heaven, rejoicing together at each other's salvation; the parents blessing God that their children are saved, and the children praising Him that they are not separated from their parents. At such a sight your parent says, Shall my family meet together thus? and then the thought of your having been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, with a most sincere consecration, attended and followed with earnest prayers and faithful instructions, inspires the hope that you will come to Heaven when you die.

When a departed spirit from this earth enters the heavenly world, there is doubtless great joy

and welcomings from those already there. With what interest may we suppose a parent in Heaven hears it announced that another soul has come to join their number, hoping that it is its child. Thus, it may be, your departed parent thinks of you; but alas! as you now are, your entrance into eternity will only occasion sorrow.

Perhaps you would meet your parent as you entered the world of spirits. You would probably find that parent a glorified spirit, arrayed in shining garments, its countenance beaming with happiness, its voice full of music. The parent would immediately see by your affrighted look and trembling voice that you were not found ready to die, that you had not made God your friend, Christ your Saviour, nor Heaven your home.

My child, your parent would say, Are you indeed impenitent? You were taught what you must do to be saved. I gave you to God in Baptism, and there was everything in your case to make it easy for you to be a pious child. You have forsaken the guide of your youth, and forgotten the covenant of your God; I can do nothing for you. — Farewell my child, till the judgment day, and then, farewell forever!

Can you endure the thought of such a meeting with your departed parent, and of such a separation? And must it not take place unless you are changed

from what you now are? Soon you may die, and realize all that I have described.

Instead of this, a happy life, a calm death, and a joyful meeting with the departed, may be yours. You have been dedicated to God in Baptism, so that now, if you will return to God, He will receive you. Though you have neglected it so long, it is not too late. God, and Christ, and the Spirit of Grace will rejoice to own you as their child. And if there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over a sinner that repenteth, the news of your repentance may reach your parents and friends in Heaven, and make them more happy than we can describe.

It may be that your parents are yet living. Nothing would give them more joy, if they are Christians, than to see you devoting yourself to God.

You may soon stand at their dying bed; how happy will you make them if they can then look upon you and feel that there is a probability of your meeting them in Heaven!

Perhaps they may soon be called to see you die. If you have become a Christian, you and they will rejoice at the prospect of having a home in Heaven, where death cannot enter. And then, when you are gone, the belief that you are in Heaven will make them happy, and lead them to think of dying, with the delightful hope of seeing their child a glorified spirit.

Again, if you survive them, and are useful in the world, how glad will you make them, in Heaven, by all that you will have been permitted to do for Christ on earth, and how happy will they be in recollecting that their dedication of you to God was not in vain.

Do you ask, What shall I do? Go before God in prayer, and tell Him that you have come to renew the dedication that was made of you in Baptism.

Then give yourself away to God in some such words as these: My God and Father, Saviour of my soul, and Holy Spirit — to whom I was given when I was a child — I feel that it is my duty to love Thee with all my heart. Thou wast good to me when I did not know it: Thou hast given me pious friends to pray for me and to dedicate me to God. Although I was not able to give my consent to that dedication, I rejoice that it was made, and I now come to do myself what was then done for me. I now give myself to God, and from this time I will say, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth. I give myself away to the Great Redeemer, who loved me, and gave himself for me; I bless Him that He was willing to be a child, that He was once young like me, though He also made earth, and Heaven, and all things. To this Saviour, great and glorious as He is kind, I now give myself away, to love and serve Him forever. I give myself up to the Holy Ghost, beseeching Him to dwell in

me, and make me pure in heart, to correct all that is wrong in my temper, disposition, and feelings, and to fill me with the love of God, and fit me to serve Him here and enjoy Him forever.

You cannot pray in this manner, with sincerity, and then act accordingly, but God will hear you, and remember his covenant, and be your God. Then all things are yours: whether life or death, things present and things to come, all are yours; and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

It may be that you, who now read these lines, were baptized in infancy by pious parents, but have renounced the faith which was their comfort and hope in life and death. Perhaps you have joined yourself to those who reject the truths which they thought essential to salvation, and in the belief of which you were baptized. Their God you may have forsaken, their Saviour you may have denied, and the Holy Ghost, whom they adored and loved, you may have grieved. Some temptation, perhaps, has lured you away from the path of your parents. For the sake of praise, or favour, or gain, or pleasure, you may have cast off the covenant which God made with your parents on your behalf. Or, without any obvious reason, you are reckless of religion, and of your soul.

Are those parents in Heaven? They can never cease to think of you; they are waiting to hear of your return to that covenant which they made for

you with God. It is possible that you may be brought back. I speak on the supposition that you are fighting against convictions, and are determined not to be converted. God may affect your mind by that silent power which has brought hundreds like you to think on their ways, and return from their apostacy. Or He may send trouble upon you, and bring you back by His rod. You may indeed be an exception to the general rule of His grace as a covenant-keeping God; but it is in vain for you to entrench yourself by arguments and bad influences against His mercy. If you do not provoke Him to cast you off forever, the same power that smote Saul to the earth, the still small voice that made Elijah hide his face in his mantle when he had withstood the thunder and whirlwind, *can* yet bring you to repentance; though this affords you no ground for presumption. You are a baptized child, and you know it; you belong to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and you cannot longer refuse to hear the voice of your conscience, or to yield to those cords of love which now are drawing you into covenant with your Saviour, without danger of being separated from your parents and of being abandoned of God forever.

CHAPTER VIII.

Words to a Husband, who has offered his child on the ground of the mother's faith. Evidence of kind feeling on his part. Feelings of a minister and of Christians towards him. Present difference between the parents may be eternal. Consequences. The mother and child in Heaven. The father lost. His recollections of home. Appeal to him from God's goodness in giving him a child. Obligation and inducement to consecrate himself to God.

Refusal of a husband to have his child baptized. Unfavorable influence on his character. Effects of the opposite conduct. Cases of the first kind. Consequence of injudicious marriage. Duty of the wife and friends in the case. Discipline of the mother in faith and prayer. Wives of impenitent husbands. Influence of either upon the other a decided one. The wife's danger and duty.

A household without religion. An infant placed there. Meditations upon such a house. The parents poor. Life not the only season of trouble and sorrow to the impenitent. Appeal from their children. Feelings of children in eternity towards irreligious parents. The dwelling of the rich. Children and other blessings. Susceptibilities to pleasure. Prospect beyond the grave. The whole family in hell. The whole family in Heaven. Fearful responsibility of impenitent parents. Dedication of themselves and children urged.

Baptism in the Mother's name.

It is pleasing to see a man who is not a member of the church, or by profession a Christian, ready and willing to assist his wife in presenting her

child for Baptism. It is an evidence that shame does not triumph over his respect and affection for his wife and the mother of his children, and that the fear of man that bringeth a snare has not wholly entwined itself about his conscience. The man who truly promises to respect and honour his wife, will remember that he is to respect her conscience and honour her fear of the Lord; and he will do this when she wishes to offer her child in Baptism, though he knows that he will be condemned by it for not being able to offer the child in his own name.

Though one feeling which we have in seeing a man do this, is that of respect for the submission of his own feelings to those of his wife, we cannot repress other feelings, and it may be proper to state them here.

We always think, Shall the wide separation, which now exists between these parents, continue forever, and one of them be in Heaven, while the other is lost? Shall this father look up towards Heaven from his future abode in eternity, and say, 'I might have been there with my family, had I been wise to know what was for my peace!' Shall he look round upon scenes of guilt and torment in hell, and remember the fireside and the home that smiled at his coming in, the wife of his youth, and the children whose footsteps and voices once made him think that he was the happiest man on earth!

It is affecting to see such a man hold up his child for Baptism. God has placed the little creature in his care, and now he seems to present it to his Maker as an expression of gratitude, and of desire for His blessing; but on the part of its mother alone! Why not on his part? Shall God give you a child, and his goodness not lead you to repentance? Can you hold up such a proof of God's love as a child is, and not give your own self to the Lord? Does not such a scene bear witness to the duty and obligation of loving God? and is it not a delightful opportunity for you to consecrate yourself to God, when you come to His temple with His gift in your hands, and draw so near to Him in an act of dedication? If the reader is one who has offered up his children for Baptism in their mother's name, remember that God says, 'I will be a God to *thee* and to thy seed;' and let His goodness lead you to repentance. You will remember these scenes of your children's consecration in eternity: Shall it be with them, in Heaven? That happiness is now within your reach.

The cases are rare, and yet they do occur, in which fathers are not willing that their wives should have their children baptized. When this arises from self-will, as it frequently does, it indicates a state of general feeling in the man at home, which is not wholly favorable to domestic

happiness, nor to his reputation as a husband and father. It is a great injury to a man to be an unkind and disobliging husband; it injures him in his inner man, in ways which he does not suspect; whereas the smallest acts that indicate the submission of his own feelings to those of his wife in certain cases, and that under consideration is one of them — has a good influence upon him, by making him a better and a happier man.

But we have known cases in which these considerations could not be appreciated, but the man has persisted in a rude and almost brutal resistance of his wife's desire to dedicate her children in Baptism. When the wife, though pious before marriage, consented against the remonstrances of friends and of her own conscience, to unite herself with one who she knew did not fear God, and perhaps was addicted to bad habits, we see her sin in her punishment so clearly, as not to feel that her desire to dedicate her children can be as sincere and pious as it might have seemed under different circumstances; — and still, we feel more anxious to surround the children of such a union with religious influences.

There are cases in which the wife has become a Christian after marriage, and has wished to dedicate her children in Baptism; but her husband, himself a despiser of religion, will not yield to argument or persuasion. What shall we say to such a man?

Anything of the nature of stern remonstrance, may only make him more desperate in his general resistance to religious influences, and to this particular proposition. Something may be done by making him feel that it is the interest you take in his children, and not any design upon him, that leads you to urge the matter of their Baptism. The thought, kindly expressed, of his being an obstacle in the way of their salvation, and an appeal to his better feelings in waiving his own opinions to please his wife, may have some effect upon him. When you look at the power of a quiet south wind in sinking piles of snow and ice into the earth, you cannot but think how true an emblem it is of the influence of 'soft answers,' and of a course of uniform meekness and kindness in melting a stubborn heart.

The mother, especially, should never cease from prayer and judicious effort; by the circumstances of her situation, God may be trying the strength of her faith and her importunity, and may suspend great blessings for her family upon the result of the trial.

The wives of impenitent husbands are too apt to suffer themselves to be drawn away from their own standard of duty, instead of seeking continually to draw their husbands to that standard. You either see a softening influence working upon the man's character, at least in the way of restraint, from the

pious example and the consistency of his wife, or else the wife, however exemplary before marriage, sinks down into a state of stupidity, or conformity to the world. A Christian in such a union needs to mark that passage, 2 Peter, 1 : 10. "Give diligence to make your calling and election *sure*," for daily meditation and prayer; — not for her own sake only, but for the sake of the offspring whose eternal destiny is, in a special manner, and in the midst of peculiar dangers, placed under her care. It should be the mother's constant endeavour to have her children baptized, so as to surround them with every possible religious influence, as well as for the influence which her vows may exert upon her own conduct in her family.

This book may find its way into a house where neither of the parents are pious, and their children are growing up without religion. Perhaps there is an infant in this house, the joy of its parents, the gift of God, an immortal spirit destined to Heaven or hell, and that according as the influence or neglect of these parents may decide.

It is melancholy to be in a house where God is not regarded. Over this dwelling no angel listens to the voice of prayer or praise. On its door-post is written by invisible hands, Without God in the world. No blood of the passover marks it as a dwelling of some of God's people; no altar at the

fireside or in the chamber, invokes his presence and blessing.

Here is a family bound together by ties the most interesting of any on earth. Perhaps the parents are poor, and are compelled to labour hard for a living.

How sad to think that after working like slaves to live a few years, they may go where the wicked never cease from troubling, and the weary are not at rest! How desirable that they should have God for their portion, and Heaven for their home, so that years of toil and hardship here may be followed by rest and joy, made doubly sweet by earthly trials. But now, there is reason to fear that the family, parents and children, will struggle through a hard life, only to meet a worse condition together beyond the grave.

God now appeals to your hearts through your infant child, or older children. Labour not for the meat that perisheth to sustain the life of your child, as though this were your whole duty. Remember that God has committed the forming period of an immortal spirit's history and condition to you, and that your relation to this child is forever to be to you a source of joy or sorrow. You must dedicate this child to God, and bring it up for Heaven.

Then, first, give your own selves to the Lord; it will be cruelty which that child will understand

and feel, if it should be lost, and will utter imprecations upon you for it, if you shall neglect its early religious instruction. It may hereafter cry, "O that I had been born a heathen, and my parents had thrown me upon the shore. Then my soul might have been taken to Heaven, and now I should have been a saint in light, but my *Christian* parents were the cause of my eternal pain!" If you would not occasion such weeping and wailing from that child, who now smiles at you as its protectors, give yourselves with your offspring to God in the bonds of his covenant.

Perhaps in your dwelling God has poured out a profusion of goodness, and with children, He has given you much to charm the eye and delight the heart, and you may be highly susceptible to the refined pleasures of life. All this you may now have, without religion, or a prospect of happiness beyond the grave. Your hopes are bounded by the narrow term of life; you and your children have no provision for another world. What must it be for you, so sensitive to pleasure and pain, to be shut out of Heaven with your family, and to spend eternity with them in the world of sin and suffering! What exquisite pleasure will be yours, if all your present sources of happiness and susceptibilities to enjoyment, are refined and perpetuated in Heaven;—and if home and the relations of

life, are so delightful to you here, can you bear the thought of being stripped, like a tree by the blast of winter, of those attachments that now constitute your chief, perhaps your only, happiness? Consider what distress and ruin you are bringing upon this beloved household, by neglecting to consecrate yourself and them to God. You are preparing the way for their final separation, or for their united banishment from God. Your kindness to them here, your affectionate endeavours to make them happy in this world, will only make their doom and their future portion more dreadful, by its contrast with their happiness in this life. But who can paint their bliss, if, by your pious and faithful conduct, the whole meet in Heaven! What way of effecting this is more suitable than to dedicate your children, and yourself with them, to God! What motive can more properly lead you to begin a religious life, than a seasonable concern for the souls whose destiny God has in a measure entrusted to your care?

CHAPTER IX.

RESTRICTION OF INFANT BAPTISM to the children of believers. I. The ancient privilege of believers. The sign of the covenant with them. Illustration. The rainbow. No reason why either should cease. II. Inconsistency of one who is not a Christian offering a child to God. Principle of divine government. Importance of a visible distinction between the church and the world. Answers to objections.

ON BEING RE-BAPTIZED. Its impropriety shown, from the meaning of Baptism. Cases of adult Baptism by the apostles, and the Baptism of Christ not in point. Baptism not a profession of religion. Right view of this matter, and an argument from it. To be re-baptized is to renounce the previous Baptism. Solemn and responsible act.

On what grounds is Infant Baptism restricted to the offspring of believers?

When God revived his church in Abraham, who was the father of all them that believe, He made the consecration of children, and their admission with their parents into covenant, the privilege and duty of his peculiar people. It was to them a precious privilege, it gratified the parental affection, and was a bond between the pious Israelite and God. If believers now do not enjoy this privilege,

if their offspring do not bear a peculiar relation to God, and God to them, we are deprived of a great blessing, and that too, under a dispensation which professes to be superiour to that which is past in the richness of its blessings.

This privilege does not seem by its nature to be restricted to one age or dispensation; it grows out of the natural relation of parents and children. When God would mark by a peculiar token, the covenant made by Him with believers, He selected the *natural affection of parents* for their children, and, as it were, sanctified or set apart this instinct, to be a sign between Him and them. Many years before, He had, in the same manner, set apart the natural effect of the sunlight upon the retiring cloud, as a sign of His covenant that the waters should no more deluge the earth, and this was an appropriate and beautiful emblem of his covenant. And now, as the bow in the cloud is as fresh and fair to us as when eight souls hailed it as the sign of God's covenant with them and with the world, as the principle in nature by which it is produced is everlasting, and as the significancy of it is as cheering to us as to those who saw it spanning the Heavens after the flood, so God's recognition of parental affection in believers, and the bestowment of his blessing upon it, is as desirable and precious now, and the principle and reason of it is the same now, and its significancy as a sign of his covenant is as great now, as in the days of the early church.

We cannot believe that the important article of a peculiar relation of the believer's offspring to God and of God to them is omitted in the New Covenant, especially when we consider that there is nothing in that relation which was any more peculiar or precious to Abraham and the Jews, than to Christian parents, and nothing in its nature that required its restriction to one age or dispensation.

Our belief of the peculiar relation of the children of believers to God, established in the ancient church, and continued without repeal, in the Christian dispensation, is not the only reason for restricting Infant Baptism to the children of believers.

It is inconsistent for a man to do that for another which it is the other's duty to do for himself, but which, without good reason, he is unwilling to do. This is the case when parents, who have never given their own selves to God in covenant, propose to offer Him their children, that his covenant may be established with them. There is an inconsistency in their conduct that must strike every one who does not regard the ordinance as a mere ceremony. They seem to say, as they stand before the congregation, We are not willing to have that God for our portion, whom we now ask to be the God and portion of our child.

Do you pity the child which is therefore ex-

cluded from the privileges of Infant Baptism by the fault of its parents? This is in accordance with the great principle in the earthly government of God, by which children are affected, for good or evil, by the conduct of their parents. One way in which He chooses to influence men, is through their natural relations and affections. It has been one object of this book to impress this principle upon the minds of parents, and to induce those who are not pious, to have mercy upon their children, and for their sakes, upon themselves. Until they acknowledge God as their God, it is inconsistent for them to profess to do it for their children; it can be only a profession.

It is the tendency of this age to break down the distinction between the church and the world, and Christians, as they grow worldly, acquiesce in the tendency. While we should not *boast* ourselves as the peculiar people of God, — if we are ashamed before the world of our profession and hope as such, God will cast us off. We should insist on the restriction of Infant Baptism to the children of visible Christians, as not only right and proper in itself, but as peculiarly important now, to make the churches feel that they have privileges, and obligations also, which distinguish them from the world.

'But *every Jew* could have his child circumcised; and it is said that Infant Baptism is in the place of circumcision.'

The whole Jewish nation was then, *the church* of God; and other nations were, in a well-known use of the term, *the world.* All *members of the visible church now*, are entitled to the privilege of having their children baptized.

'But some church members who have their children baptized, are not so faithful with their children as some who do not profess to be Christians.'

This is true, and greatly to be lamented, as well as the fact that there were some Jews who had the privilege of circumcision, who were not so faithful, perhaps, as some heathens. On the same principle, however, upon which Christ said of the wheat and tares, Let both grow together till the harvest, we must give Baptism to the children of those who are connected with the visible church, without respect to their private character as parents. To their Master, between whom and themselves they have made a solemn covenant, they must stand or fall.

It may be that the reader is one who has doubts about the validity of his Baptism in infancy, or childhood, on the ground that he was not capable of giving his assent to the rite when he was baptized.

What is signified by Christian Baptism? I answer, The separation or consecration of the baptized

person to the belief and practice of that religion, in distinction from all others, of which Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are the objects of worship. The performance of the rite of Baptism is only the placing of a badge on the baptized person, or a solemn mode of signifying his consecration. Now if you have done that for yourself which was implied by your Baptism, if you have consecrated yourself to God, and in spirit and in truth have embraced the Christian religion, the repetition of the ordinance can add nothing to what it has already done for you. You now have all which it signifies. To seek a repetition of the outward form would be to exalt a rite above its spiritual end. If you have gained the latter, it is all which was intended by the ordinance.

It is no argument against Infant Baptism that those who are mentioned as baptized by the apostles were mostly adults. This does not prove that none but adults were baptized.

Christ was not baptized in infancy, for the plain reason that Baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost had not then been established. So that the example of Christ, or of believers baptized by the apostles is no warrant for us to be re-baptized.

Some think that Baptism is a profession of religion, and that for this reason they must be baptized

when they make that profession. But the Scriptures represent Baptism as something *given* to us, rather than something *done* by us; — a *privilege*, to be *received*, rather than a *duty* to be *performed*. So the Eunuch seemed to think. He looked upon Baptism as something to be done *to* him and *for* him. "See, here is water: what doth hinder me to *be baptized*. And Philip said, not, Thou oughtest, but *thou mayest;* it was *permission*, and a *grant*, rather than an act.

Baptism is not our profession to God, but His profession to us; His seal placed upon us: and if it was placed upon you in infancy, and He has since owned it in your conversion, is it not taking an unwarrantable freedom with a sacred and solemn thing to demand it a second time?

By being re-baptized, you reject your Infant Baptism. It may be owing to that covenant which your parents made with God for you when you were baptized, that you now have a hope of Heaven. It is probable that God, who remembers his covenant for those that love Him, and for their children, connected all your spiritual blessings with your early dedication. Now, besides the uselessness of repeating the form of Baptism when you have all that is signified by it, is it not a serious matter for you to renounce, as you propose to do, the covenant which God made with your parents for you when you were young? Your object in

doing it, you say, is to make a covenant with Him in your own name. But have you not done this already?

If you are re-baptized, you will come forth before the world, not so much to make a covenant with God, as to renounce the covenant already made for you, with your parents, by your God and Saviour. Your language will be, "I do not believe that God made a covenant with my parents for me." But if He did, as we believe, you may put a stop to the blessings of that covenant, and to the answer of the prayers made for you by pious parents and the church at your Baptism; — prayers yet waiting to be fulfilled in blessings upon you and yours to many generations.

CHAPTER X.

THE MODE OF BAPTISM. Sprinkling is valid Baptism. Examination of cases in the New Testament. I. Saul of Tarsus. II. The Jailor of Phillippi, and his house. III. The Eunuch. IV. John's Baptism. Baptism of Christ. V. The three thousand at Pentecost.

But perhaps you cannot feel that you were *baptized* in infancy, because you doubt whether sprinkling is Baptism.

It will be easy to show that sprinkling is valid Baptism, and, therefore, that there is no objection, so far as the mode is concerned, to the practice of Infant Baptism.

Let us consider some of the more prominent cases of Baptism recorded in the New Testament, and see what appears to have been the probable mode of Baptism in those cases.

I. We will begin with the case of Saul of Tarsus.

Saul was struck to the earth, on his way to Damascus, by a sudden blaze of light; and a voice proclaimed, '*I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.*'

His eyes were 'blasted with excess of light,' so that he was blind three days and three nights. You can easily imagine his excitement of mind, and his consequent prostration of bodily strength, especially when you consider that during these three days and three nights, 'he neither did eat nor drink.'

As he sat in the house, there came to him one of his intended victims, the leader of the Christian band, and probably the one to whom he would first have done violence. The meek disciple lays his hand upon the blind man's head, and says, 'Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared to thee in the way as thou camest, has sent me that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.' Were there no strong emotions in the mind of Saul, at the pressure of that hand, and at the sound of that voice? And when 'there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, and he received sight,' and looked round upon the little company of disciples watching him with wonder and compassion, and compared the scene with the anticipated scenes of blood for which he had come to that place, could his condition have been such as to admit of his being led out to a river to be immersed? He had not eaten anything for three days and three nights, and did not eat till he had been baptized; for it is said, 'He arose and was baptized; and when he received meat he was

strengthened.' How natural to suppose that water was applied to him in a way consistent with his exhausted condition. It is most rational to suppose that it was done by affusion.

The public Baptism of Saul, the persecutor, in 'Abana or Pharpar, rivers of Damascus,' would have made such an impression in favour of Christianity, that it is probable it would not have been omitted, if the practice of the apostles had been to baptize by immersion. They would have strengthened him with meat, and then would have made *a great occasion* of his Baptism. Had this been done, it seems probable that so exciting a scene would have been noticed by the sacred historian. But the Baptism is passed over with a few words, because, as we believe, it took place in the house, and was performed by sprinkling, inasmuch as the condition of Saul could not have permitted any other mode.

II. Another case in which there is every reason to believe that the mode of Baptism was not immersion, is that of the jailer at Philippi. Paul and Silas were bruised and sore, from the stripes which they had but just received. The earthquake had, of course, alarmed the city, and the streets were not so empty and still as at other times. Can any one suppose that Paul and Silas would have ventured forth, with a whole household, into the

streets of a city just alarmed by an earthquake? Would the jailer have had such disregard for his own life, and for that of the apostles, as to have carried these state prisoners outside the prison gates at midnight? Would the apostles have ventured into a river, at that season, in the wounded state of their bodies? Can any one suppose that *immersion* held such a place in the minds of the apostles that they would disregard all these circumstances, for the purpose of getting this family into the river at the dead of night?

"But the jailer, and his household, and Saul, *may have been* immersed in a bathing vessel."

And they *may have been* sprinkled. One supposition is as good as the other.

There is more probability that sprinkling or pouring was used, than immersion in a bathing vessel. There is something offensive and unnatural in the supposition of the latter mode. Think of the process of baptizing a whole family in this manner. From the expression, 'all his house,' there would seem to have been a considerable number in the jailer's family, either of adults or children. Suppose that they were all adults; — and that some of them were such, is probable from the occupation of the jailer, which required assistants or servants. A bathing vessel is filled; the jailer is ordered to prepare himself, his family and domestics, to be

immersed. Is it probable that they all had garments suited to the service? One of them lies down in the vessel, and Paul or Silas bends his aching body, and in so doing, breaks the wounds that had stiffened in their blood. It required no small exercise of strength to lay a full-sized man into a bathing vessel and lift him up again, and the apostles, only a few hours before, had been severely beaten. The service for the jailer is finished. The wife comes next; an hour before, she was a heathen, and had just received impressions of divine truth that had filled her with wonder and joy; now, she is commanded to lie down in the bathing vessel before her servants, and two strange Jews.

Is the same water used for each successive subject? Or are their common feelings of decency such that the vessel must be emptied and filled again after each Baptism? No one of them would ordinarily bathe in the water that another had immersed himself in; they therefore must have filled the vessel each time with clean water; — and all this is supposed to have been done in that most interesting hour when the minds of the household were awakened and anxious, or were just rejoicing in hope. Their thoughts must be turned off from Christ and the way of salvation, to the process of lying down in a bathing vessel — a service which must have been strangely inconsistent with their state of mind, and must have given them bad im-

pressions of a religion that could neglect the soul, in its moments of intense feeling, for a ceremony so inconvenient, unnatural, and improper, and of ludicrous rather than impressive effect.

Nothing is gained by supposing that there was a large number of vessels in the house or prison. The performance of a service that required such effort on the part of the apostles, and such preparation on the part of the household, at such a time, a service that must have occasioned a distraction of thought and feeling, which the apostles would have been anxious to prevent, has no semblance of probability in its favour.

But look at a different scene. The family are gathered in one room. One of the apostles is preaching to them Jesus. The way to be saved is clearly pointed out; one after another breaks forth in some expression of joy, penitence, or confession. The apostles discern the evidence of true conversion, and wish to consecrate the household to the Christian faith. Water is brought in a convenient form. Each bows the head, and the emblem of the Spirit's influence descends like the small rain upon the tender herb. All is still, save when the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is uttered by the apostle, or the feelings of the new converts break through the restraint of the service. Everything in the scene deepens the impressions of divine truth; no change of garments, no labour, no

promiscuous meeting, or exposure, around a bath, disturbs the thoughts of the inquirers after eternal life. It is difficult to believe that this household were not baptized by sprinkling.

III. The case of the Eunuch may next be considered. When he said, "See, here is water," what reason is there for concluding that it was a deep river, and not a shallow stream? And why could they not go *down out of the chariot* to *a brook*, as well as down *into* a river? for the prepositions here used, may be rendered either way.

Besides, if the expression, *down into the water*, certainly denotes that the Eunuch was immersed, then Philip must have been immersed also; for they both went *down into* the water, 'both Philip and the Eunuch.' Many do not consider that *down into*, does not mean *down under;* if it does, the Eunuch must have immersed Philip, or Philip must have plunged into the stream; for one went as much *into* the water as the other. The preposition here used does not necessarily lead any further than to the edge of the water; *down to* the water. And then, allowing that they did step *into* the water, it is as likely that sprinkling took place as immersion.

It is not probable that the Eunuch would put the garments, in which he was riding, upon his wet body; nor that he had conveniences for making

himself comfortable after bathing; nor that he took the trouble to have his change of raiment removed from its secured place; for he merely commanded the chariot to stand still, and took nothing with him to the water, nor did any servant bear anything after him, nor do we read that he went through any process of arraying himself afresh after his Baptism. The whole narrative leaves the impression on the mind that he and Philip stood *in* the water, or by the side of it, (according as the preposition is translated down *into*, or down *to*) and that Philip baptized him with water raised in his hand. Here, if any change at all was needed in their dress, it could only have been to loose their sandals from their feet; for in those countries, the lower part of the limbs was bare, and the loose garment which they wore around them could easily be adjusted without being removed. We never see the picture of 'Philip baptizing the Eunuch,' in which they are both represented as up to their waists in water, without thinking of all the inconveniences before and after the service, which make it improbable that immersion was the mode of Baptism. It is much more easy to think of them as standing by the side of the water, and the Ethiopian, without the confusion which exposure to a stranger would occasion, without the inconvenience or trouble of a change of dress, or the natural agitation which any one feels in the hands of another in the water, receiving from Philip the

simple sign of the affusion of God's Spirit, while the small drops that flow from his temples upon his dress, affect his mind more than the violent rushing of waves over him. Without excitement, agitation, or delay, his thoughts averted not even for a moment by the simple rite from the theme of Philip's discourse, and bearing upon his head the fresh emblem of his separation to the Christian faith, he ascends the chariot, and goes on his way rejoicing.

IV. In regard to John's Baptism, it seems most probable that sprinkling or pouring was the mode of applying the water. It is not probable that the multitudes of men and women who came to John were immersed in the dress which they then had on; and that they were uncovered in that promiscuous assembly is not to be supposed; that they all had changes of raiment, or that they could or would have used them under such circumstances, if they had them, is incredible. Besides, they could go down *into* the water, and come up *from*, or *out of* the water, as well if they stood and were sprinkled, as if they were immersed. They had only to leave their sandals on the shore, and adjusting their dress, which was convenient for such a service, step into the stream where the Baptist stood, receive the affusion of water from his hand, which would cost him but little effort compared to the labour of plunging and raising

multitudes, and then retire for others to come around him in quick succession. That a human creature, especially of one of whom it is said, 'John did no miracle,' could have endured the labour of plunging multitudes day after day, is amongst the many improbabilities of the case.

From this, it would follow that our Lord was not immersed. If he was baptized *in* Jordan, if he went *into* the river and came up *out of* the water, all this it was most convenient to do in order to be sprinkled. How far into the river he went, we are not told. The improbabilities of immersion, in the other cases of John's Baptism, lead us to suppose that the Baptist took his usual place in the river, but only so far in as not to be obliged to stoop far to raise the water in his hand; and that Christ was thus baptized by affusion. The contrary cannot be proved, and this, under the circumstances, is most probable.

'John was baptizing in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there,' not because he immersed: for the words *much water* are, in the original, *many waters*, or streams, convenient for the multitudes and their cattle. Had he baptized by immersion, one stream would have answered his purpose; and *many waters* would have been useless.

V. Then as to the *three thousand* on the day of Pentecost, it cannot be made at all probable that

they were immersed. Did they stand all day in the clothes in which they were plunged? Or had they suits of apparel, or convenient places to prepare for immersion? Besides, it cannot be shown to be possible that the apostles could have immersed three thousand in the given time, even if their strength would have sufficed. All these cases appear to us to have been cases of sprinkling or affusion.

CHAPTER XI.

MODE OF BAPTISM, continued. 'Buried in Baptism.' No reference in the expression to any mode. The word 'Baptize,' used without reference to a mode. Illustrations. Lord's *Supper*. *Baptism* of the children of Israel. Mode of Baptism amongst the earliest Christians uncertain. Reasons for baptizing only by immersion. Difference of opinion on the mode of Baptism.

The mode of Baptism not prescribed in the New Testament. Illustration in this of the nature of Christianity. Further illustration in the Lord's Supper. Conformity to the original mode of the Supper. Inferences.

REASONS FOR PREFERRING BAPTISM BY AFFUSION. Conclusion of the subject.

ON LEAVING A CHURCH TO BE RE-BAPTIZED.

There is an expression in the New Testament, which, perhaps, more than any other, leads many to believe that the proper mode of Baptism is immersion. The expression is found in two places.

Romans vi, 4. Therefore we are *buried with him by Baptism* into death.

Colossians ii, 12. *Buried with him in Baptism.*

It is said that these passages refer to the mode of Christ's Baptism as being that of burial or immer-

sion, and indicate that those who were baptized in the apostles' time, were buried, or immersed, in water.

It does not appear to me that there is the least reference in these expressions to the mode of Baptism, but that the meaning is, As the burial of Christ in the tomb signified that He was dead, so our Baptism implies that we must be *dead and buried* to sin. It is *burial to sin*, and not *burial in water* which is here referred to, and the proof is this : In the verse next to the passage from Romans, it is said, ' For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his " — what ? Baptism ? This would have been the word if a comparison of our Baptism with that of Christ had been made. But no ; it is in the *likeness of his death*, and not of his Baptism, in which we are here said to be *planted together with Him*. Those who are *baptized into Christ*, or into a belief or obedience of Him, are *obliged unto* a resemblance, by deadness to sin, to the death of his body. Thus they have a fellowship with Him in his death, or are *buried with Him*, they dying *unto* sin, because He died *for* it.

Were we disposed to pursue this subject, it might be said, in addition, There is no proof that Christ *was* buried, when He was baptized. We have also seen that it is improbable that Paul himself was immersed. He would not therefore have been able to say that *we*, meaning to include himself with

his fellow Christians, were baptized like Christ, if Christ *were* immersed, and Paul were sprinkled.

When, therefore, it is said of Christians that they are *buried with Him in Baptism* the meaning is, They must regard their Baptism, whenever, and in whatever way performed, as obliging them to be *dead and buried* to sin, because Christ *died and was buried* that they might thus die unto sin. An attentive perusal of Romans vi, will confirm this view of the subject; and compared with the solemn and important doctrine there enforced, the idea of a mere similarity in an outward form of Baptism is tame and without effect.

Those who practise immersion seek to derive some authority for it from the original classical use of the word *Baptize*. This is not sufficient, in our view, to warrant the belief that immersion alone is Baptism. It is often said, '*Baptizo*, in Greek, means, to plunge, or *to immerse*; therefore, when we are commanded to be *baptized*, we must be *immersed*, or it is no Baptism.'

The word *supper* means a *full meal*; following out the above argument, Unless you eat a *full meal* at the Lord's Table, you have not eaten the *Lord's Supper!*

The word *Baptize*, we see from this, is sometimes used in the New Testament, just as the word *Supper* is employed in connection with the other ordinance, — not to denote the *quantity*, or a *mode*, but merely a religious use of a common thing,

without respect to form or quantity. We have eaten the Lord's *Supper*, when we have taken only the smallest part of each element; we are *Baptized*, let the original meaning of the word be as it may, when we have had only a little water applied to us.

Again. When the apostle says of the children of Israel, And were all *baptized* unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, the idea of a mode of Baptism is inadmissible from its obvious contradiction of historical fact. *The cloud* was above and before them, to guide their march. Had they been *immersed* in it, they would, of course, have been in a fog or mist, and then the cloud, instead of leading them safely, would have confused them. An immersion in such a mist would have been more favorable to modern controversial purposes, than to the amazed and anxious Israelite, in that hour of terrour.

How could they have been *immersed* 'in the sea?' The perfection of the miracle consisted in their being wholly dry; and the women and children were probably spared the inconvenience of such a spray as would have been necessary to resemble our Baptisms. It is said, They were *immersed*, by being *surrounded* with the sea. But they were not surrounded with it. The sea was only 'on their right hand and on their left;' behind and before was an open passage.

Baptized, therefore, in this case, denotes merely a

devotement, without reference to its being done by immersion, or in any other way; the writer probably meant to express this thought, that the Israelites, as they followed the cloud, were *sworn under Moses* by the solemn act of passing through the divided sea under his guidance.

It cannot be said, therefore, that baptize always means, and ought always to be translated, *immerse*. The word, in this case and in others, has passed into the signification of a *religious devotement*, without reference to mode, or quantity of water.

That the earliest Christians baptized by immersion, there is more assertion or inference than authentic testimony; but that immersion was practiced within 200 years after the apostles, and then for many centuries, is evident beyond dispute. Whether the practice did descend from the immediate successors of the apostles, no one can determine.

It is easy for controversial writers to assert or deny the contrary, but an appeal to the proper authorities shows us that the mode of Baptism immediately after the apostles' time, is not known.

Grant, now, that there are reasons which convince some that immersion *was* practiced by the apostles. We cannot feel their force. We *see* these reasons; we understand the argument from the original meaning of the word *baptize;* but this no more convinces us that Christian Baptism must be per-

formed by dipping, than the word *Supper* convinces us that we must make *a full meal* at the Lord's Table.

We understand the argument that John is said to have baptized *in* Jordan, but we are convinced that this does not denote the mode of Baptism, but only the fact that John *used the Jordan* for his Baptisms. We are familiar with the terms *down into* and *up out of*, but we know that the original Greek authorizes us to say, *down into* and *away from;* and that Philip, who went *down into the water*, was not immersed; and moreover, that the original, in this case, neither requires us to suppose anything more than a fountain or brook, nor any act of the parties *in it*, rather than by the side of it. Still, learned and conscientious men prefer to think that immersion *was* the primitive mode of Baptism; and others, equally learned and conscientious, declare that *immersion* is not prescribed in the New Testament, by example or precept. These men can all judge of evidence; they all feel their accountability to God for so doing; and none can boast themselves against their fellows in these respects.

Does any one say, It is not probable that so important a thing as the mode of an ordinance would be left uncertain?

The fact, that it *is* uncertain, is evinced by the disagreement, upon the subject, of the ablest scholars, and the most devoted Christians. Christianity, then,

binds us to no one form in any ordinance or service; and in this respect it breathes a free spirit, and seeks in its worshippers only the spirit, and the spiritual truth. It permits immersion, pouring, sprinkling, in Baptism, and owns, by the richest of Heaven's blessings, — the gift of that Spirit, whose influence is emblematized by the water, — all true Christians of every name, in whatever form the water of Baptism may have been applied to their bodies.

Observe the spirit of the Christian religion in regard to modes and forms, as illustrated in the Lord's Supper. This Supper was instituted in an upper room at midnight; there was no leaven in the bread used on the occasion, (for Christ had called his disciples together to eat the Passover;) they reclined upon couches around the table, leaning the head upon the left arm; hence, John is said to have leaned upon Jesus' bosom, because he *lay* next to Him, (which was a common mark of favour to the particular friend of the master of the feast,) and his head was on the Saviour's breast. There were no females present at this Supper.

Now, Christ has said, *Do this in remembrance of me.* Does any Christian church *do this*, in the form and manner here described. On what principle do we vary from it? We say, The outward form is not essential to the validity and intention of the ordinance. So long as bread and wine are used in remembrance of the Lord, the ordinance is satisfactory to every communicant, and no one feels

that he does not receive the Lord's Supper because the mode in which it is administered differs from that in which Christ gave it to his disciples.

If the precise mode in which the first Supper was celebrated is not essential to the right observance of that ordinance, we cannot see that any particular mode of applying water is essential to Christian Baptism. If strictness of form is necessary in either of the ordinances, we should be more afraid of deviating from the original mode in which the Supper was first celebrated, because it is said, Whoso eateth and drinketh unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. The man who should insist upon having the Lord's Supper administered in precise imitation of the form used by Christ, would, however, have more reason for his requirement, in our view, than if he should insist upon one form of Baptism. There can be no difference of opinion as to the manner in which the Supper was celebrated; but there is more reason to believe, that, in several cases, to say the least, Baptism was formerly administered *otherwise* than by immersion, than that it was administered by immersion at all.

It would seem, from all that has been said, that God has purposely left the mode of Baptism undetermined, because it is unimportant; and that we are no more confined to one mode in this ordinance, than to one precise posture of the body, to the use

of one kind of bread or wine, to the hour of midnight, or to an upper room, in celebrating the Lord's Supper. It is, in our view, one of the most beautiful traits of Christianity, that it triumphs over external modes and forms, and seeks only a spiritual effect by its two simple rites: leaving it to the choice of every Christian in what way to have water administered to him in Baptism, and in what way, so far as outward forms are concerned, he will receive the Lord's Supper.

If it be asked why we prefer Baptism by sprinkling, to Baptism by immersion, the answer is as follows:

It seems to us more agreeable to the various circumstances of seasons, age, sex, health, convenience, comfort, propriety, composure of mind. It is the only form of Baptism which can be practiced with convenience in all climates, at all seasons of the year. It has an advantage over immersion in a river, in the fact that we are not restricted by the weather from baptizing in this manner; and it seems to us unlikely that God would prescribe any mode of a religious ordinance, under the *Christian* dispensation, which could not, if we wished it, be performed for several months in a year. We cannot feel that it is consistent with the spirit of Christianity to break the ice of a river for the purpose of Christian Baptism; — not that any one is forbidden to do it who sees fit, or that

any one has authority to question the Christian liberty of his fellow Christians in this particular, for that would be an equal violation of the spirit of Christianity; but it strikes the natural feelings of most men as an austerity which does not comport with our religion, so much as with some others. The Saviour's words on another subject may be accommodated to this case, and on the same principle we may say, *Baptism was made for man, and not man for Baptism.*

In warm climates, where bathing in a river is a common practice, and the feelings of the people are thereby accustomed to it, many of the objections which some feel to public immersion, are obviated. Still, we think that affusion is a better emblem of that which the washing of water typifies, viz: the influence of the Spirit; which is represented in the Bible as applied to the subject, rather than the subject applied to, or immersed in, that influence. Christianity, of which Baptism is one of the seals, is called the dispensation of the Spirit, and the Spirit is always spoken of as being *poured out*, and *shed* upon us, and as descending upon us like rain.

We believe that Baptism by immersion is valid; and we would not interpose our preference of another mode to the hindrance of full liberty of conscience or taste in others. But that God has confined us to any form of Baptism, without regard to the manners and customs of different nations, we

think is inconsistent with the spirit of the Christian religion.

In view of all that has now been said, the reader, whom I have supposed to have been baptized in infancy, may see reason to believe that the *mode* of Baptism is not essential to its validity, and therefore, if he is satisfied that he was a proper subject for Baptism, as I have also endeavoured to show, and shall illustrate further, there is no ground for scruples about his Infant Baptism.

It may be that you are already a member of a Christian church. If you are not deceived, you have had communion with God, and Christ, and the Spirit of all grace, which has been to you a seal of your hope. If you know anything, you know that you love God. You have had evidence, since your connection with the church, of some increase in Christian character, and of acceptance with God.

Perhaps you have become dissatisfied with your Baptism by affusion; you propose to leave your church, be immersed, and join another church who hold that immersion is essential to church membership.

What I now say, has no reference to the belief or practice of that church whose right to their own opinion and conduct is as sacred as our own. But, addressing a member of our own denomination, as

I now do, I feel at liberty to speak with the freedom of a Pastor to the members of his flock.

Your feelings and proposed conduct may be thus illustrated. I take so familiar a case with some hesitation; yet, as it aptly expresses the writer's views of the conduct referred to, I shall make no apology for using it.

An individual was once invited to meet a few friends at the house of a distinguished citizen. He felt embarrassed at the thought of complying with the invitation, for the host was a stranger to him, in some measure, and far above him in life. But when he entered the room, he was received with great attention and kindness; soon, he was seated at table with the family and their friends, and was made to feel that he was welcome, and that his host was desirous of his acquaintance and friendship.

After he had thus been placed quite at his ease, and had been very happy, a cloud came over his mind. He recollected that when he entered the house, he omitted a very important ceremony; or that the form of it was so unlike the custom of good society, that he had, in his own opinion, virtually omitted the thing itself. Either he had not rung at the door, or had not been properly introduced, or had not paid proper respects at his introduction to certain members of the family. He begged to be excused, rose abruptly from his seat,

in the midst of regrets, went to the outer door, and shut himself into the street, then rung the bell, the door was opened in due form, he was ushered into the room, paid proper respects to his host and each member of the company, and took his seat again at table.

His host hardly knew whether to smile at his scrupulous and formal conduct, or to reprove him gently for thinking that after he had received the most satisfying proofs of regard, he should suppose him to be so set about modes and forms as to wish to have this disturbance made by an attempt at a more ceremonious introduction.

Such appears to me to be the conduct of every Christian who, having received proofs of divine favour in his connection with the church of Christ, must needs go through the ceremony of joining the church of Christ again, because he thinks that Christ would have the water of Baptism applied to the body in a different quantity, or by a different mode! And I cannot but feel that Christ looks upon such conduct, perhaps with great tenderness and compassion, but at the same time with sorrow that his friend should have no better knowledge of the nature and spirit of Christianity, as distinguished from Judaism.

CHAPTER XII.

The authority for Infant Baptism. Objection considered. Authority for Infant Baptism illustrated. I. By family prayer. II. Females at the Lord's Table. III. The change of the Sabbath. Inferences.

Proof from the early Christian Fathers. I. Augustine. II. Cyprian and others. III. Pelagius. IV. Origen. Remarks on this kind of evidence.

It is frequently said, 'There is no *command* in the New Testament to baptize children.'

There are many things for which we have no specific command, whose propriety and duty are as plain from the nature of things, as any mention of them by name, in a particular precept, could make them.

An illustration of this we have in the duty of family prayer.

The neglect of family prayer, by the father of a family, a member of the church, would be considered censurable; and the observance of this duty is expected of a man who has a family, when he makes a profession of his faith. It is probable that most evangelical ministers and churches would

hesitate to receive a man into the church, even if they were satisfied with the general evidences of his piety, if he should refuse to practice family prayer.

But such a man might say to the minister and to the church, Show me one *command* in the Bible to observe family prayer, and I will do it.

We should search the Bible in vain for a specific mention of family prayer. Ministers, who would preach upon this subject, can never find a text that comes nearer to it than this: 'And David returned to bless his household.' A caviller could easily suggest a want of connection between the text and the duty derived from it.

But it may be said, The duty of family prayer is very plain from the apostolic injunction, 'I will that men pray everywhere,' and the family is included by the term 'everywhere.' We might accede to this remark, and add, The Saviour's last command, 'Go teach all nations, baptizing them,' warrants the Baptism of Infants, who are included by the expression, 'all nations.'

It will be seen, from what has been said, that the duty of family prayer, so important and proper, and a prerequisite, under ordinary circumstances, in the way of evidence of a right state of feeling, to admission to the church, is, after all, only a matter of inference from the nature and fitness of things.

On the principle of rejecting Infant Baptism for

want of a specific mention of infants as subjects of Baptism, we could not admonish, nor even blame a man, who should reject family prayer, saying, The Bible contains no command to pray in the family!

We see, then, that a *duty* may, in some cases, be a matter of *inference*, and that the absence of a specific mention of a thing, which may be included in a general direction or principle, is no argument against that which is not thus specified. The New Testament contains several striking instances of this principle.

There were no females present when the Lord's Supper was first instituted, and we find no *command* to admit them to this ordinance. Yet, the nature of the Lord's Supper is such, that we *infer* their right to it; and in this case, *inference* is as good authority as a positive command.

We nowhere find a command to observe the first day of the week instead of the seventh, as the Christian Sabbath. It is a matter of inference, from the repeated mention of the assembling of the apostles on that day, that it was the intention of Christ that the first, instead of the seventh day, should be observed in the Christian church as the Sabbath. When the Christian Sabbath took the place of the Jewish, some, without doubt, complained, We have no *express precept* for this change, and will therefore observe the seventh day, as

before, instead of the first. And so we read that they did. But the apostles, while they were kind and gentle towards those who required positive precepts, were themselves able to discern the propriety of the proposed change, and to conform to it, though, as far as we can learn from their writings, it was wholly a matter of inference with them, and not of precept. The day of the Saviour's resurrection took precedence in their feelings of that day, which had before been observed as holy time, through which, however, the tomb retained their Lord and Master. They perceived, in this, his intention of uniting the influence of the Sabbath with his cause, by making the day of his resurrection the Sabbath day. They readily fell in with so wise and suitable an expedient; but it must be observed that they record no command of Christ upon the subject; and our authority for hallowing the first day of the week is only example and tradition. Yet, what Christian mind does not feel the propriety of making that the Sabbath, on which the Lord of life and glory confirmed our faith by his resurrection? The mere mention of the assembling of the apostles on the first day of the week, is, however, as good authority for our observance of the Lord's day, as the mention of the Baptism of households is for the practice of Infant Baptism.

Female communion, the observance of the Lord's day as the Sabbath, and Infant Baptism are, to our

apprehension, equally and most plainly inferible from the nature of things. The very absence of a specific command upon these points is fitted to heighten our respect for Christianity, as a system that can trust its followers to exercise their own sense of propriety, if guarded by the Christian spirit, and in so doing, purposely exemplifies its variance from that dispensation in which everything was marked off to the apprehension of the people by the square and compass of a particular precept.

The Baptism of infants is, to our minds, plainly deducible from the nature of Baptism, and from the suitableness of the thing itself. We regard Baptism as a sign of separation to the Christian faith. While those who believe, are, of course, entitled to it, we think that a pious parent who is resolved to bring up his child on the principles of the Christian religion practically enforced, may present it for the seal of Baptism.

From the full testimony in the HISTORY OF THE CHURCH, that the Baptism of infants was practised by the apostles and early Christians, I select the following, from Wall's History of Infant Baptism.

AUGUSTINE, a celebrated father of the early church, wrote within 280 years of the apostles. In Milner's Church History, he is called the great luminary of his age. I mention this, not to get any

authority from his name for the practice of Infant Baptism, but only to show his competency as a witness. He says, "*The whole Church of Christ has constantly held that infants were baptized.*" "*Infant Baptism the whole Church practises; it was not instituted by Councils, but was ever in use.*"

A learned scholar and a minister, who valued his reputation, would not hazard it by such bold and unequivocal assertions, unless he knew certainly whereof he affirmed: — especially when history and tradition were accessible to any who chose to contradict him, and the short period between his day and the apostolic age made it easy to ascertain the truth.

One hundred and fifty years, only, after the apostles, a Council of 66 Bishops was held at Carthage. A letter was received from another Bishop, requesting the opinion of the Council on two subjects, one of which was, Whether an infant might be baptized before it was eight days old? The following is an extract from the answer of the Council:

'Cyprian, and the rest of the Bishops who were present in Council, 66 in number, to Fidus our brother, Greeting: — Whereas you judge that infants must not be baptized within two or three days after they are born, but the rule in circumcision must be observed, and no one should be

baptized and sanctified before the eighth day, the whole Council is of a different opinion.'

This proves that Infant Baptism was practised at least one hundred and fifty years after the apostles, and if the practice were of human origin, it is not credible that, in that Council of devoted men who, as Milner says, had stood the fiery trial of some of the severest persecutions ever known, there was not a question raised as to the propriety of this practice, but a unanimous vote that a child might, in their opinion, be baptized as soon as the parents pleased.

Pelagius and others, who lived within 300 years after the apostles, denied the doctrine of original sin. A great controversy ensued. Augustine, the champion of Orthodoxy at that day, demanded why infants were baptized, if they had no sin? With Augustine's views of the object of Baptism, we are not concerned. Our point is the historical fact.

This question was continually pressed upon Pelagius and his associates, as an unanswerable argument. Now, if there had been a possibility of doubt as to the proper authority for Infant Baptism, these acute and learned heretics would have made use of it. The force of Augustine's main argument could have been broken, by proving, had it been possible, that Infant Baptism was improper. This was not attempted, but efforts were made to show the propriety of baptizing infants, even if they had

no sin. So far from questioning the propriety of Infant Baptism, Pelagius said: '*I never heard of any, not even the most impious heretic, who denied Baptism to infants. Men slander me, as if I denied Baptism to infants. Baptism ought to be administered to infants with the same sacramental words which are used in the case of adult persons.*'

Origen was born within 85 years after the apostles. His grandfather or great grandfather could have been cotemporary with the apostles. Eusebius, the historian says, that his grandfather and great grandfather were both Christians. Origen must have known the opinion and practice of the apostles in the matter of Infant Baptism. He had also travelled extensively, and was acquainted with the customs of the whole Christian church.

In commenting upon a chapter in Leviticus, he says, According to the usage of the church, Baptism is given even to Infants. In his commentary on Romans, he says, For this cause it was that the church received an order from the apostles to give Baptism even to infants.

We have lately seen it stated that 'Infant Baptism was instituted in the year 1311, by the authority of the Pope; and in a Council composed of Episcopalians, Independents and Presbyterians, assembled in the Chapel of King Henry VII., in the year 1643.' It would appear from this, that the

practice had *two or three births*, probably, because one would not be considered sufficiently spurious. — The quotations made above from the early fathers have never been, and cannot be, refuted.

We would not practise Infant Baptism any sooner because Origen, and Cyprian, and Justin Martyr, did it. If Church History had been silent as to their opinion and conduct, we should still have the same grounds in Scripture and reason for the practice as at present. But when, in addition to these reasons, we find that able and pious ministers of Christ, who succeeded the apostles, and lived near their times, declare, 'INFANT BAPTISM, THE WHOLE CHURCH PRACTISES: IT WAS NOT ORDAINED BY COUNCILS, BUT WAS EVER IN USE: THE CHURCH HAVE RECEIVED AN ORDER FROM THE APOSTLES TO GIVE BAPTISM EVEN TO INFANTS,' could any form of words make us more certain that the practice of Infant Baptism is accordant with the will of Christ?

But why, then, do Christians differ as to the propriety of Infant Baptism?

For this reason, chiefly: Some adopt the principle that a specific mention of children, in Scripture, as proper subjects of Baptism, is necessary to warrant the practice; and this, they say, they do not find.

Others say, That a specific mention of children is no more necessary to extend Baptism to the infants of believers, than a similar specification is

necessary to admit females to the Lord's Supper, to have two services on the Sabbath, to require children to be present at family prayer. They say that, in their view, the intention of Baptism, and the nature of the case, affords sufficient ground for Infant Baptism.

Here, men differ; and between these two principles, which are the grounds of the rejection or observance of the practice, the reader will be left, in view of all that has been said, to take his choice.

CHAPTER XIII.

RELATION OF BAPTIZED CHILDREN TO THE CHURCH. Difference in the constitution and grounds of membership, in the Jewish and Christian church. Illustration of the use of Baptism, and its intention. Objection to Infant Baptism, that unbaptized children are frequently converted.

INFLUENCE OF A RIGHT OBSERVANCE OF THIS PRACTICE IN THE CONVERSION OF THE WORLD. Pious parental influence the great means of strengthening and increasing the church. THE FAMILY, considered as a means of spiritual good. Appeal to parents. Conclusion. FUTURE SCENES IN PARENTAL AND FILIAL RELATIONS.

It is a frequent question, What relation do baptized children hold to the church?

This question arises from the fact that when the ancient Jewish *nation* was the *church* of God, children were *members of the church.* But the constitution of the Christian church is different from that of the Jewish; *we* are not members of the visible Christian church by birth or lineage; but in every nation, he that serveth God is entitled to membership. Hence, while we believe that the children of believers now have a peculiar *relation*

to God, like the children of his ancient covenant people, their relation to the church is different from that held by the latter, because of the difference in the constitution of the two churches. The only respect—but it is the important one —in which children of believers now resemble the children of the ancient covenant people, is in the feelings with which God regards them for the parents' sake. But as church membership is not now a national right, children are in no respect members of the Christian church. At the same time, the reason why God formerly admitted them into the church, and into the covenant made with their parents, extends, we think, to the children of believers throughout the world ; and this reason is, His regard for his people. 'Because He loved the fathers, therefore He chose their seed.'

Another view of this point is of importance. No one can doubt that an object of Jehovah, in his directions and arrangements concerning the children of his ancient people, was, to secure the succession of a pious race. For this purpose, the children of his own people, rather than of the world in general, were calculated upon to perpetuate religion in the earth. This was a natural and obvious arrangement. Is it not equally natural and proper now to expect that religion will be perpetuated in the same way, and are we not to look to the offspring of Christians for the transmission of a religious influence in the

world? Is the family a nursery for all the departments of active life, of civil and patriotic service, and shall it not secure the perpetuity of the true faith?

For this purpose, we believe, children were anciently included with their parents in the covenant of God, and as the children of Christians now stand in the same relation to the continuance of religion in the earth with the children of the ancient church, they have a peculiar relation to the Christian church.

Now, though these children sustain no relation to the church in the way of accountability or subjection to discipline, they do sustain a most interesting relation to it, as those in whom, from their early consecration, and intelligent and faithful instruction as children devoted to Christ, is the hope of Christ and of his kingdom.

Another view of the propriety of baptizing them, is as follows:

Suppose that a great reformer, commissioned from Heaven, should arise in this land, and should visit all our towns to establish a certain form of doctrine and practice, appointing the stamp of a cross to be made upon the hand of every one who received the system to denote that he was a disciple, and to remind him of the obligations implied in the new faith.

That mark would be considered as a sign of the

devotion or separation of him who received it to the Christian faith.

While the reformer would wish that every one who should receive the sign, would believe with all his heart, and would refuse to give it, if he suspected hypocrisy, he would nevertheless regard it more as a sign or seal of discipleship, than as a discriminating index of the state of the heart.

So, while the apostles required of every believing adult, a profession of his faith in Christianity, and of course sought for evidences of his sincerity, they felt, without doubt, in placing the sign of Christianity upon him, that they were signifying his separation to the Christian religion as a system, rather than the certainty of his spiritual regeneration. We know not how else to understand Paul's feelings, when he says, 'I thank God, I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel.'

Such being the great object of Baptism, how perfectly natural for the apostles to secure an influence for Christianity in the earth, by taking, as it were, a vow of every believing parent for the consecration of his children to the Christian faith. How natural for the parent to say, Let the sacred sign, whose impression marks upon my heart my own consecration to the Christian religion, be laid upon my child, I engaging thereby to bring him up for Christ, and to instruct him hereafter that I

have separated him, by the use of the Christian seal, to the belief and practice of Christianity. What a powerful means would this be of securing for Christianity a hold upon the rising generation! The rite of Baptism administered to the child, would make the parents feel that their child was consecrated by an act of religious devotion; and we all know the power of an appropriate solemnity upon the mind. Such a means of propagating the Christian faith we do not believe the apostles overlooked. We believe that their commission included it. We have seen from the first of testimony, that 'the early church received an order from the apostles to give Baptism unto children.'

With the same understanding of the original intention of Baptism, *we* give the ordinance to children. It will be seen that the object is not to mark children as members, in any sense, of the the church of Christ, but to impress upon the parents and, through them, afterwards, upon their children, the feeling that there is a special relation between those children of the covenant and God, and a special obligation upon them to believe, practise, and maintain the Christian religion.

Were there nothing in Infant Baptism but the pleasure of presenting a child in public, or if it were only a distinctive ordinance of a denomination of Christians, this book would not have been

written. It is because the writer feels, in common with ministerial brethren, that the practice properly performed and carried out will do much for the conversion of the world, that these pages are presented to Christian parents.

But it may be said, 'The children of Baptist parents frequently become pious, as well as children who have been baptized.'

The proportion of baptized children who are converted, is more striking as a testimony in favour of Infant Baptism, than the conversion of some who are not baptized, is, as an argument against it. God will perpetuate his churches, we have reason to hope, mostly by the children of the pious; now, does or does not the practice of Infant Baptism tend to secure this end?

'What profit is there in Infant Baptism?' 'Much every way,' as I have endeavoured to show in the first part of this book, and chiefly, because that unto the children who receive Baptism, is committed an oracle of God. It speaks to their parents and bids them be faithful; it speaks through the parents to the children, reminding them of their early consecration; it speaks directly to the children in after life, and, by the power which a solemn act of dedication has upon the mind, it claims them as the Lord's. I refer to the testimony of Matthew Henry, already quoted, upon this point, and to the

memoirs of those who were faithfully taught the meaning and obligations of their Baptism.*

If the children who are not baptized, are *not* converted in such numbers as those that are, the fact will seem to leave an impression in favour of Infant Baptism. But if the children of Baptist parents *are* frequently converted, it is wrong to make the covenant goodness of God a reason for omitting a duty. We have no strict ritual, in Christianity, in which a ceremonial omission is immediately and obviously punished.

If any parents rejoice over pious children who were not baptized in infancy, we are persuaded that they might have more joy by observing this practice, — if they carried out its meaning and intention into faithful and holy conduct. Let it not be understood that there is any merit in baptizing a child, or in being baptized; think not to say, in a presuming spirit, We, or our children, are the children of the covenant; this, alone, will aggravate our condemnation; but faithfully prized and improved, it will be as much a means of *propagating* the gospel in the earth, as God intended that his covenant with the Jews and their seed should be of *perpetuating* true religion in the world.

Suppose that parents had suitable feelings at the time of their children's Baptism, and afterward, and

* See "Records of a Good Man's Life."

that in their subsequent treatment of them, they should act upon the principles which have now been recommended; that they should continually refer to the Baptism of their children in their prayers, beseeching God now to fulfil his covenant, and taking hold of that covenant to sustain them in importunate prayer; that they should regard their children as those to whom the cause of God in the earth looks for support in the coming generation; that they should frequently remind their children that they have been consecrated to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that God is therefore willing and waiting to be gracious to them; that they are sinning against infinite goodness, and losing great blessings by neglecting to choose God for their Portion, — and thus, by using their Baptism, with explanations of its intention and meaning, fix their thoughts definitely upon God, His feelings towards them, and their obligations to Him :— Would not the parents be greatly assisted in the religious education, and in the conversion, of their children, and might we not hope that God would fulfil that promise, *I will pour out my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring*? This promise will be fulfilled, for it is founded on a natural principle — The influence of the parental relation in perpetuating right principles, when that influence is sanctified. God

will use this principle, as in ancient times, to maintain his cause in the earth. We must always bear this in mind, amongst our devices for spreading the truth. Such attention must be paid to the religious education of the young, and such labour be bestowed for their conversion, as will be requisite, if the proportion of the friends of God in the earth is to increase, and if a large part of every life is not to be spent in sin and the perversion and waste of physical and mental strength.

When churches are composed chiefly of those who were sanctified early, and have been trained up for the service of religion, and are made to feel the nature and meaning of their Baptism, we may expect that the moral strength of the church will be increased tenfold. Rapid advances will then be made in extending the kingdom of Christ. The early sanctification of the youthful mind will prevent many of the dissensions in churches that grow out of old natural habits and prejudices in those who were too stiff to be pliable when they were converted. Then it shall be said to the Saviour, THOU HAST THE DEW OF THY YOUTH! Satan has it now; and by the long detention of souls in his service before they begin to serve Christ, a great proportion of zeal and energy is lost, or rather, is used against Christ. We must labour more for the early sanctification of children if we would see the church gain upon the world. To

this end, the Sabbath school is a useful means; the preaching of the gospel familiarly to children is profitable; right instruction from teachers in common schools is invaluable; but nothing is to be compared to *parental influence.*

It is in the *family*, that God will chiefly own and bless means for the conversion of children. *The family* is an ordinance of God, wisely and beautifully fitted to prepare minds to serve and glorify God in his kingdom here, and forever. Its incessant, gentle, noiseless influence is like that unseen and silent power of vegetation that throws up plants and flowers, herbs and trees, to crown the earth's surface. So, when the family influence of the church is what it should be, *Truth shall spring out of the earth, Righteousness shall look down from Heaven.*

Could we learn the great truth that the kingdom of God cometh not with observation, could we understand the parable of the leaven, could we see that God intends that the advancement of His spiritual kingdom shall be emblematized by His kingdom of nature, whose influences, like His own Omniscience and Omnipresence, are as still and secret as they are great, could we get instruction from the fact that the perfection of machinery is evinced by its noiseless movement, we should set more value upon such influences as those of a Christian family, and less upon combinations and showy methods of

doing good. Every father and mother might then, by influencing their children aright, do more to promote the reign of Heaven than we can describe. We must remember that public meetings and the Sabbath school, are not to supersede, or interfere with family instruction, but are intended as means to promote the latter. Instead of violent, spasmodic seasons of effort, to get sinners into the kingdom of God, large numbers of well-instructed and disciplined minds will, by the Spirit of God, we believe, be brought out of Christian families to fill the church, and promote the cause of Christ.

Let this day now begin. Let Christian parents carry each new-born child to the altar of God, and consecrate its body, soul, and spirit to FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST. Let them carry that child from Baptism with the feelings which they would have if God, by a special message, had placed it in their hands to be trained up for Him. Let them think what was implied in the Baptism of their children, if they have others who have already been dedicated to God. Let them watch the first opening thoughts of the child to shed in the influences of truth and goodness; let them so teach it obedience and submission as not to prepare it in after life to resist the Holy Ghost; let them impress the meaning of its Baptism upon its mind, and lead it to recognize the consecration which was made of it in infancy.

Then, by the blessing of God, we shall see a generation prepared for the scenes of the latter day. Perhaps the parents of this generation are to educate the actors in those scenes! A holy and blessed work is before us. Christianity is to be spread throughout the earth. All nations are to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Let us bring our children to the House of God, and by the sign of separation to the Christian faith, lay upon them the bonds of the covenant, and upon ourselves the obligation to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Does a Christian parent need anything to make him faithful in discharging his whole duty to his child? Then consider that eternity is before you, and that, amongst the thoughts which will be most present to your mind in the revolution of eternal years, no one will probably come to you with such power as this, I AM THE PARENT OF AN IMMORTAL SOUL! Where is that soul! See it, in company with angelic choirs! Hear it; it has washed its robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and the song of Heaven is on its tongue. Around it, are some who bless it as the instrument in their salvation. It is an honour to be the parent of a glorified spirit!

See two parents ascending 'the heavenly plains,' with a whole family of redeemed children! God

only can measure the joy and transport of their hearts.

Another spirit appears from amongst the ranks of Heaven, with a calm, submissive look. Its children are not amongst the spirits of the just; its children think of it, in their abode, on which the light of the celestial city gleams afar, and its surging music rolls and dies; and one of them says to another, If our parent had been faithful with us, we might not have come unto this place of torment!

O God, may we baptize our children in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost! Precious, inestimable privilege, that seals to them thy covenant, helps us in fitting them for Heaven, and, with bonds of love, holds them to thy service and throne. May we prize this liberty as a means of our future joy, in being surrounded at last with our offspring in Heaven. May no child of ours lie down in sorrow, with the name of his God, Saviour, and Sanctifier, inscribed upon him. May none of us, who have presented a child at thine altar for this inscription, reflect upon our conduct here as the cause of the child's perdition, nor, in eternal bereavement of those whom we love, feel that resignation and submission must chiefly constitute for us the happiness of Heaven. Let the family circle there be full; and as Jehovah passes by, in the special manifestations of His presence, and

smiles upon our household in the fullness of their joy, may we, in participation of that joy which He himself feels at the sight of His own holy and happy offspring, cry, HERE, LORD, ARE WE, AND THE CHILDREN WHOM THOU HAST GIVEN US.

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